A HOLY COMMONWEALTH:
THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF RICHARD BAXTER

by

Thomas Wheeler Nuckols

Department of Religion
Duke University

Date: Oct 7, 1967

Approved:

Waldo Beach
Waldo Beach, Supervisor

John H. Hallowell

Creighton Lacy

Frederick Herzog

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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Ph.D.
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The purpose of this study is a critical exposition of the political thought of Richard Baxter (1615-1691). Since Baxter's writings were occasional writings which cannot be understood apart from the historical context and events, an historical study of the period and Baxter's relationships and activities has been prefixed to the exposition of his thought. An assessment of his relationship to the emerging liberal democratic state and its chief early spokesman, John Locke, concludes the study.

Baxter was an active and influential participant as minister, adviser, and writer in the period which saw the Puritan Revolution, the attempts at a Puritan Commonwealth, the Restoration, and the Glorious Revolution. He was perhaps the ablest spokesman for the conservative Puritans at the time that the Puritan movement reached the peak of its influence and began to disintegrate as a

cohesive force.

Baxter's political thought was in essence an adaptation of the medieval ideal of the respublica Christiana to Seventeenth Century Protestant England. His ideal was a comprehensive, holy, and concordant Church and godly civil rulers cooperating together in nourishing a theocratic, holy society. He believed that the principal threats to this ideal were the growing secularism which was personified in Hobbes, the Papist threat, the divided state of the English Church, and democrats such as Harrington and the Levellers.

Although Baxter accepted the medieval ideal in essence, the dominant interpretive pattern in his thought is covenantal rather than the hierarchical, organic, and teleological pattern of medieval thought. By using the covenant pattern in interpreting law, conscience, and the sovereignty of God, he defended the moral, rational nature of man and God's government against the mechanical pattern of interpreting the world and man which thinkers like Hobbes were adopting.

Baxter rejected a purely utilitarian social contract theory of the origin of the state. Political government is rather part of the divine constitution of the cosmos. By making man a social creature, God has ordained that men are to live in society under government. Since man is rational, moral, and ultimately responsible to God, government by law is the only government consistent with his nature. He developed doctrines of inalienable rights based upon inalienable duties, constitutional limits on rulers, and a right of resistance to abuses of power to make effective his ideal of limited government under law.

Yet Baxter was not a liberal. He believed that the purpose of government is to promote the common good and the glory of God and endowed the sovereign with broad powers to accomplish these ends. In particular he insisted that government is to concern itself with the moral and spiritual welfare of subjects, since this is the chief part of the individual and the common good. Baxter belongs within that part of the Calvinistic tradition which began with the oneness of the corpus Christianum rather than the duality of Church and state. He attempted to preserve the integrity of both, but his position on Church-state relations is a modified Erastianism. Although he moderated the intolerance of the theocratic tradition, he held back from universal toleration.

Baxter believed that the best form of government for England was a constitutional mixed monarchy with a carefully regulated electorate intended to secure a succession of wise and godly rulers. He opposed absolutism on one hand and democracy on the other. The attainment of the theocratic ideal, he was convinced, depended more upon the quality of the men who were governors than upon any other factor.

Although Baxter was not a liberal, the Puritanism he represents did make a significant contribution to the emergence of the liberal democratic state. The covenant pattern of interpretation and the activism of the Puritan ethic helped transform the passive subjects of medieval society into responsible citizens. By developing doctrines of natural rights and a right to resist from natural law and the social contract, he went beyond Hooker and medieval thought. In this, he may be considered a precursor of Locke. His covenant interpretation of liberty and rights, which roots them in duty, provides an alternative to the anomie and autonomy of the individualism of some types of modern democratic thought.

PREFACE

Richard Baxter's life spanned the two-thirds of the Seventeenth Century when the principles and theories of social and political relations which were to prevail in the English speaking world were first enunciated. He was an active and influential participant as minister, adviser, and writer in the period which saw the Puritan Revolution, the attempts at a Puritan Commonwealth, the Restoration, and the Glorious Revolution. His contemporaries were Laud, Cromwell, Hobbes, Milton, Lilburne, Locke, etc. He was perhaps the ablest and most representative spokesman for conservative Puritanism at the time that the Puritan movement reached the peak of its influence and began to disintegrate as a cohesive force. A study of his political thought and activities is therefore a study of a significant figure in a critical and creative period in the development of Western civilization.

There is an extensive literature on Baxter. A number of biographies have been written, the most notable of which is the two volume study by Frederick J. Powicke.[1] His Churchmanship has been the subject of several works. Baxter was an ecumenist at the time when the English Church was disintegrating into the many denominations of Protestantism, and in this modern day of growing ecumenicity these studies investigate his activities and proposals for a comprehensive Church. Writers on the social thought of the period such as Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, R. H. Tawney, and Richard B. Schlatter make frequent reference to his thought. He finds a place in the studies of the political thought of the period. Two dissertations are directly relevant to his political thought, J. P. Jaeger, "An Introduction to Richard Baxter's 'A Holy Commonwealth'" and James M. Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: The Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)." A work by Richard B. Schlatter, Richard Baxter and Puritan Politics, is the most adequate study of his political thought.

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[1] The works of Powicke and other works cited in this Preface are found in the Bibliography.

No study in depth of Baxter's political thought has been done, however. J. P. Jaeger's dissertation devotes only one chapter to a summary of the leading ideas of A Holy Commonwealth, Baxter's most important political work. Richard Schlatter's book has a forty-page introductory summary of Baxter's political activities and theories. Most of his work consists of selections from Baxter's political writings. Although some aspects of this work are excellent, e. g. the description of Baxter's political allies, the analysis of Baxter's political thought is brief and tends to emphasize some aspects to the neglect of others. Thus further study of Baxter's political thought would seem to be amply justified and desirable.

This study attempts a critical exposition of Baxter's political thought. Since Baxter's writings were occasional writings which cannot be understood apart from the historical context and events, a lengthy historical study is prefixed to the exposition of his thought. An assessment of his relationship to the emerging liberal democratic state concludes the dissertation. Baxter's own categories have been used in the exposition of his thought. Where possible, his own words have been used. Spelling and punctuation have not been altered except to eliminate the excessive italicizing and to correct obvious printing errors.

Baxter lived in the age before the modern compartmentalization of religion from politics. Church and religious questions were inextricably involved in politics in the Seventeenth Century so that even a Hobbes had to discuss them at length. Beyond this, Baxter subordinated politics to ethical purposes and in effect made political theory a division of ethics. In his understanding, theology gives man knowledge of his ultimate good, ethics provides guidance in realizing this good, and politics seeks to implement in society the conditions most conducive to its realization. Thus though politics itself is not the end or good of man, it can contribute to its attainment. Because of this understanding of politics, Baxter's political thought is closely related to theology and ethics, and any study of it must cross the lines which the modern mind draws.

I am indebted to many in more ways than I can acknowledge. Teachers and fellow students have provided the encouragement, skill, and resources to pursue the task of research and writing. I wish to particularly thank my committee and its chairman, Waldo Beach, who guided me. The Zion Research Library of Brookline, Massachusetts, permitted me the use of A Holy Commonwealth, and the staffs of the Duke Library and the Duke Divinity Library rendered every assistance I asked. Woodrow Wilson, Gurney Harriss Kearns, University, and Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowships provided financial support. Above all, I wish to thank my wife for her patience, love, encouragement, and help.

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A HOLY COMMONWEALTH:
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CHAPTER I

RICHARD BAXTER AND THE 'GOOD OLD CAUSE'

> The writings of Baxter are distinguished, even above those of his cotemporaries, by the peculiarities of the man and the age in which he lived. Those only who know what the author was, what were the vicissitudes through which he passed, what were the changes and commotions of the times in which he lived, and what were the men with whom he had to do, can enter fully into the spirit of his writings.[1]

Such was the justification of one student of Baxter for prefixing a lengthy historical introduction to his two volume selection of Baxter's writings, and such must be the justification for this historical introduction. Baxter himself pleaded that "some sudden Occasions or other extorted almost all my Writings from me" and therefore that "the reader who can safely censure the Books is not fit to censure the Author, unless he had been upon the Place, and acquainted with all the Occasions and Circumstances."[1]

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[1] Leonard Bacon, Select Practical Writings of Richard Baxter (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; New Haven: Durrie and Peck, 1835), I, 3. Bacon was Pastor of the First Church in New Haven, and something of Baxter's continuing influence is indicated in Bacon's plea to the reader of Baxter's writings to "let these devout and searching treatises have that attention which they deserve. Read to learn what truth is, and to receive the truth in love; to learn what duty is and to do it." Ibid., p. 4.

A Nation Divided: Prelatists and Puritans

As Baxter grew to young manhood, England was dividing into two camps in preparation for civil war between King and Parliament, and his entire public life would be dominated by that war and its aftermath. The occasions and circumstances which "extorted" his writings from him were those of the turbulent period of the Puritan Revolution and the Restoration. An understanding of Baxter's writings must therefore begin with an understanding of the movements and events of that period.

As a contemporary observer and participant in this struggle, Baxter recognized the complexity of the forces at work. "The Concord of this Parliament," he observed, "consisted not in the Unanimity of the Persons . . . , but in the Complication of the Interest of those Causes which they severally did most concern themselves in."[2] In analyzing the groups and causes in the two camps, Baxter pointed to their social composition. The majority of the gentry, their tenants, and the poorest of the people supported the King. On Parliament's side were the minority of the gentry and the majority of the tradesmen, freeholders, and the "middle sort of men."[1] More important for Baxter, however, were the political and religious issues at stake. Above all he believed that it was fear of arbitrary government and dissatisfaction with the King's religious policies which led to the Revolution. And of these, though he confessed that "the Public Safety and Liberty wrought very much with most," he believed that it "was principally the dissatisfaction with the King's religious policies which filled the Parliament's armies and put courage in its soldiers' hearts."[2] As to the religious alignment, on the Parliament's side was the "generality" of those who were called "Puritans, precisians, religious persons," while the Bishops and their supporters, called Diocesans or Prelatists, and those "who were not so strict" were for the King. There were many points of difference about religious matters between the two camps, but most important for the subject of this dissertation is that the two camps broadly represented different Protestant answers to the question of the shape of the new social order to be constructed on the ruins of the medieval synthesis.[1]

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[1] Reliquiae Baxterianae: or Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Time, ed. Matthew Sylvester (1696), I, 124. Hereafter cited as Reliquiae.

[2] Reliquiae, I, 18.

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 30.

[2] Ibid., p. 31. Those who were primarily concerned with the public safety and little concerned themselves with religious questions were called "Good Commonwealth's Men." Ibid., p. 18.

From the time of Elizabeth's refusal to support a thorough reformation on the model of the Continental Reformed Churches, there was an increasing cleavage in the English Church between those who supported the Elizabethan settlement, that is, an Erastian ecclesiastical settlement with a theology substantially Reformed and a liturgy substantially Catholic, and those who pressed for reforms beyond those which Elizabeth and her successors would grant.[2] The details of the emergence of the Puritan and Prelatist parties as opposing factions within the English Church need not delay us.[1] The immediate controversy was waged over the Catholic elements which remained in the vestments and liturgy. The deeper issues at stake, however, were the issues which divided the Reformed and Erastian Protestant traditions.[2] The central tenet of English Protestant Erastianism was the earthly supremacy of the King in the Church. The twin pillars on which this supremacy was erected were the Divine Right of Kings and non-resistance, doctrines which left the King free of any checks save his own conscience and God. In contrast, Reformed Protestantism developed theories of limited resistance, limited secular sovereignty, and an independent jurisdiction for the Church which included a large role in shaping and directing society. The real nature of the issues at stake became clear as the struggle intensified under

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[1] For Seventeenth Century interpretations of the Puritan Revolution see Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell (eds.), The Good Old Cause: The English Revolution of 1640-60; Its Causes, Course and Consequences (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1949); and Thomas Hobbes, Behemoth, edited by William Molesworth (New York: B. Franklin, 1963). For modern interpretations see Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958); William Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955); and J. W. Allen, English Political Thought, 1603-1660 (London: Methuen and Co., 1938).

[2] For Tudor and Stuart policy in regard to religion and the Church see Wilbur K. Jordan, The Development of Religious Toleration in England from the Beginning of the English Reformation to the Death of Elizabeth (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1932); The Development of Religious Toleration in England from the Accession of James I to the Convention of the Long Parliament, 1603-1640 (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1936); and The Development of Religious Toleration in England from the Convention of the Long Parliament to the Restoration, 1640-1660 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938). Hereafter cited as Jordan I, II, and III respectively.

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[1] For a study of these developments in detail see M. M. Knappen, _Tudor Puritanism_ (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939).

[2] For the development of Protestant political thought see J. W. Allen, _A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century_ (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960) and _English Political Thought, 1603-1660_; John Neville Figgis, _The Divine Right of Kings_ (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) and _Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, 1414-1625_ (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960); Herbert D. Foster, _Collected Papers of Herbert D. Foster_ (n.p.: Privately printed, 1929); Ernst Troeltsch, _The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches_, translated by Olive Wyon (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931); Hans Baron, "Calvinistic Republicanism and Its Historic Roots," _Church History_, VIII (1939), 30-42; James H. Nichols, _Democracy and the Churches_ (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951); Thomas G. Sanders, _Protestant Concepts of Church and State_ (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); and Michael Walzer, _The Revolution of the Saints_ (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Charles I. The culmination was a frontal attack by the Parliamentary forces on arbitrary government and Prelacy, that is, Stuart absolutism and Laudian Episcopacy, and the demand for reform root and branch. When Charles would not grant these, civil war began as the conflict moved from debate to the battlefield.

Two aspects of the Puritan movement do need to be noted as background for understanding Baxter's thought. The first is the reluctance with which the Puritans abandoned non-resistance and the supremacy of the civil magistrate in the Church. Not only were these doctrines useful to all Protestants as ideological weapons in the continuing battle with the Papists, but they were also useful to the Puritans in particular in refuting the charge that they fomented rebellion and that their beliefs were incompatible with monarchy. Moreover, the reform or Puritan movement was not an exotic import into England but indigenous, and the English Erastian tradition was deeply rooted and pervasive.[1] Thus even after the Puritan Revolution the conservative Puritans were often remarkably Erastian and greatly qualified the right of resistance, as will be seen in the case of Baxter.

Secondly, the nature of the Puritan movement needs to be clarified. In the broadest perspective Puritanism should be seen as a part of the never ending attempt to find a solution to the predicament of man, as "one more instance of a recurrent spiritual answer to interrogations posed by human existence,"[1] as a way of life "leading and guiding to true happiness, both in this life and in the life to come."[2] It was, then, first of all a religious movement, a quickening of the religious spirit.[3] The sources of this quickened religious impulse which took shape in the Puritan movement were manifold, for it was deeply rooted in medieval piety, nourished by the reading of the English Bible, and shaped by the influence of Continental Protestantism, humanism, and contemporary English concerns and developments.[4] Its final end was to make men holy and to lead them to heaven, but no part of human life escaped its influence. For it was a quickening of the religious spirit which was so profound that its effects were manifested in every area of life from the individual to the social and political. This was necessarily more true of Puritanism than of other religious movements because the distinctive note in Puritanism was its unceasing emphasis on the disciplined effort to bring theory into practice and to make holiness visible. The impulse toward the holy life, therefore, resulted in a movement for visible reform not only of the life of the individual but of family, Church, and commonwealth and brought Puritanism into full interaction with the social, economic, and political forces at work in England.

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[1] See below, pp. 168ff.

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[1] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 4.

[2] William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), p. 36.

[3] Significant interpreters of Puritanism such as M. M. Knappen, Perry Miller, William Haller, and Ernst Troeltsch undertook their studies of Puritanism out of their interest in the history of ideas, an interest which can be traced to the concern since Karl Marx with "ideologies." See George L. Mosse, "Puritanism Reconsidered," Archiv Fur Reformationsgeschichte, LV (1964), 37-47. Each of their treatments, however, emphasizes that the Puritan movement was first of all a religious phenomenon and studies its political, social, and economic aspects in relation to its theology.

[4] Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, p. 5; Miller, op. cit., pp. 89ff.; Mosse, op. cit.; Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," Church History, XX (1951), 37-57.

Puritanism was, therefore, also a social movement composed of an interaction of ideas, men, events, and environment.[1] As a party within the English Church, "Puritan" designates "those English Protestants who actively favored a reformation beyond that which the crown was willing to countenance and who yet stopped short of Anabaptism."[2] As to its social ideals, as A. S. P. Woodhouse succinctly puts it:

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[1] For this perspective see Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (New York: Schocken Books, 1964). As a study in theory this dissertation focuses on the theoretical aspects, but this is not to deny the importance of the sociological perspective, that is, that ideas and theory were shaped by sociological factors as well as sociological factors by ideas and theory.

[2] Knappen, *op. cit.*, p. viii. For a good discussion of the various definitions of Puritanism see Arthur Barker, Milton and the Puritan Dilemma, 1641-1660 (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1942), p. 338, footnote 26.

> Puritanism means a determined and varied effort to erect the holy community and to meet, with different degrees of compromise and adjustment, the problem of its conflict with the world. The acceptance of the ideal bespeaks a common element in all Puritan thought. The rival modes of application denote wide differences.[1]

The nature of the Puritan movement and its relationship to politics is illustrated in Baxter's life. Baxter's relationship to politics is the story of a gradual involvement growing out of his religious concerns which finally resulted in his emergence as the leading spokesman for the conservative Puritans on political and social questions. Baxter's Puritanism did not at first directly involve politics at all, however. It is therefore important to begin not with the theories and practical politics which Baxter developed, but with his religious development, for the key to all that followed is found there.

The Making of a Puritan

Baxter's father, a freeholder called a gentleman for the sake of his ancestry, had become a part of the quickening religious spirit when through the reading of the Bible he had been changed from a dissolute to a serious and godly life. He was a

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[1] "Introduction," Puritanism and Liberty (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 37.

Conformist, however, and was not concerned with the politics of the Puritan movement.[1] Indeed, Baxter did not personally know anyone in conscious dissent from the established order until he was some twenty years of age. He recalled at that time, however, that his father had been called a Puritan, and this made him reluctant to believe all the accusations made against the men labeled such.

Under the influence of his father, Baxter as a boy already aspired after a holy life, was possessed of a tender conscience and a fear of sinning, diligently read the Scriptures, and, what most directly linked him to the Puritan movement, read the practical divinity of "affectionate practical English writers," whose purpose was to inculcate the Puritan version of the epic of salvation and the Christian life.[2] These influences combined with a naturally serious disposition and a bout with severe illness brought Baxter to a consciousness of the "unexpressible weight of things eternal." After being kept long "with the Calls of approaching Death at one Ear, and the Questionings of a doubtful Conscience at the other," he finally arrived at a settled conscience and a clearer life perspective.[1] As he gratefully recalled this experience many years later:

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[1] This treatment of Baxter's life is based upon Baxter's autobiography, the Reliquiae, supplemented by other works, particularly Frederick J. Powicke's two volume biography, A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924) and The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross, 1662-1691 (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1927). Hereafter cited as Powicke, I and II respectively. William Orme's The Life and Times of Richard Baxter, in The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter, edited by William Orme (23 vols.; London: James Duncan, 1830), I, 1-412, is largely repetitious of the narrative of the Reliquiae. Other biographies and interpretive essays are noted in the Bibliography. Orme's edition of Baxter's works will hereafter be cited as Works. The frequently cited A Christian Directory will be cited as CD, followed by the volume of Orme's edition and the page number.

[2] For an excellent discussion of these writers and their writings see Haller, "Physicians of the Soul," The Rise of Puritanism, pp. 3-48.

> It caused me first to seek God's Kingdom and his Righteousness, and most to mind the One thing needful; and to determine first of my Ultimate End; by which I was engaged to choose out and prosecute all other Studies, but as meant to that end: Therefore Divinity was not only carried on with the rest of my Studies with an equal hand, but always had the first and chiefest place! And it caused me to study Practical Divinity first, in the most Practical Books, in a Practical Order; doing all purposely for the informing and reforming of my own Soul.[2]

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1. Reliquiae, I, 3-5.

2. Ibid., p. 5. Next to practical divinity Baxter was attracted to the Scholastics, Aquinas, Scotus, Durandus, and Ockam. He was attracted to them, he says, "because I thought they narrowly searched after Truth and brought Things out of the darkness of Confusion: For I could never from my first Studies endure Confusion! Till Equivocals were explained and Definition and Distinction led the way, I had rather hold my Tongue than speak! . . . I never thought I understood anything till I could anatomize it, and see the parts distinctly, and the Conjunction of the parts as they make up the whole." Ibid., p. 6. This passion for application (practical divinity) and exactness makes Baxter an excellent example of the validity of Perry Miller's contention that "the great difference between Calvin and the so-called Calvinists of the seventeenth century is symbolized by the vast importance they attached to one word, 'method'," and he cites Baxter as such an example. Op. cit., p. 95. This passion was also the opening by which rationalism penetrated the Calvinistic armor.

Having accepted the Puritan ideal of the visibly holy Christian life, Baxter was to find himself more and more drawn to the Puritan party. Thus when he was persuaded to go to the Court at London in 1633 at about 18 years of age as "the only rising way," he did not like the style of life he found there and was "glad to be gone."[1] When he first met some Nonconformists some months afterwards he found himself drawn to them, and when he learned that these men of "fervent prayers and savoury Conferences and holy Lives" were the men persecuted by the Bishops, he concluded that "those that silenced and troubled such men could not be the genuine followers of the Lord of Love."[2] He yet remained a Conformist at the time of his ordination in 1638, however, so that he had no scruple in subscribing to the Book of Ordination, the Book of Homilies, and the Book of Common Prayer. It was only later as a minister that more detailed study of the questions at stake moved him toward Puritan Nonconformity.

Baxter's growing Nonconformity and his consequent alienation from the established order is indicated in his evaluation of the offer of the position at Bridenorth, a Church exempt from episcopal supervision except for a triennial visitation: "As soon as I heard the place described," he wrote, "I perceived it was the fittest for me; for there was just such Employment as I desired, and could submit to, without that which I scrupled, and with some probability of peace and quietness."[1] Baxter scrupled the use of the cross in baptism, the surplice, etc., but his alienation from Prelacy or the English Diocesan frame of Episcopacy, as he called the established order of the English Church, was primarily prompted by his concern with the lack of discipline in the Church and required subscription to oaths, particularly the Et Caetera oath of 1640, which was part of Laud's program of enforcing thorough conformity. He became convinced that "the English Diocesan frame, was guilty of the Corruption of Churches and Ministry, and of the ruine of the true Church Discipline, and substituting a heterogeneal thing in its stead," while the Et Caetera Oath and its terrors awakened him and others who preferred to remain aloof from the growing political tension "to look about us and understand what we did."[2] But with all his growing dissatisfaction with the established order, Baxter refused to separate from that order. For he regarded "Censoriousness and Inclinations toward a Separation, . . . to be a Threatening Evil, and contrary to Christian Charity on one side, as Persecution is on the other."[1] Baxter was to remain true to this conviction throughout his life and opposed with equal vigor the oppression of tender consciences on one hand and Separatism on the other.

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 11. [2] Ibid., p. 13.

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 14-15.

[2] Ibid., p. 16. Baxter believed that the diocesan polity of the English Church reduced the Parish Churches to chapels and their pastors to mere teachers and worship leaders by depriving them of their governing and disciplinary powers and thereby made true Church discipline no longer possible. The "heterogeneal thing in its stead" was the too secular discipline exercised in the Church courts. The Laudian program to secure thorough conformity, the Et Caetera Oath in particular, he regarded as intended to secure "the unalterable subjection of us to Diocesans." His evaluation of the whole program is eloquent: "I saw that he that will be loved, must love; and he that rather chooseth to be more feared than loved, must expect to be hated, or loved but diminutively: And he that will have Children, must be a Father: and he that will be a Tyrant must be contented with Slaves." Ibid., p. 14.

While Baxter was quietly going about his duties at Bridgenorth, national events were moving toward the Civil War which would soon dramatically force him to take a stand within the Puritan political camp. Scotland's rebellion against Laud's imposed conformity had forced King Charles I to call Parliament into session after his eleven year (1629-1640) attempt to rule England without it. Parliament refused to grant him the money he needed for the war against the Scots until grievances were redressed. Charles refused and dismissed Parliament, but continued reverses in the war against the Scots once again compelled him to call Parliament. This time Parliament would not be denied.

Parliament's grievances were political and religious; under the Parliamentary banner were gathered both the causes of liberty and of reformation.[2] In a zeal for reformation root and branch, the Puritan-dominated Parliament cast Laud into prison, abolished the High Commission, and began positive measures to reform the Church. Part of this program was a "Committee for Scandalous Ministers" to receive petitions and complaints from parishes concerning unsatisfactory and incompetent clergymen. One of these parishes which petitioned against its clergy was that of Kidderminster in Worcestershire. On the strength of their complaint the Vicar was compelled to agree to a compromise whereby he would remain as Vicar but would allow the Puritan party in the Kidderminster Church to call a lecturer or preacher. Richard Baxter was the man they chose. Religiously, Baxter was firmly in the Puritan camp, and his acceptance of the call to Kidderminster identified him with Parliament's cause.

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 14.

[2] Baxter explicitly discusses the two causes in Ibid., p. 18. Common cause was initially possible, he explains, because the

The Good Old Cause

When Baxter arrived in Kidderminster in 1641, England was rapidly preparing for civil war. Within a short time he took the final decisive step of joining the Parliamentary forces in their struggle with the King, a decision which was to prove to be the most fateful political decision he ever made. Baxter goes in

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religious party agreed with those concerned about the "Vindication of the People's Propriety [property] and Liberties," and this caused the others to "easier concur with them against the Proceedings of the Bishops and High Commission Court."

considerable detail into his reasons for joining the Parliamentary forces both in his autobiography, the Reliquiae Baxterianae, and in his most comprehensive work on politics, A Holy Commonwealth.[1] The former was written after the Restoration when Baxter was accused of being a rebel, while the latter was written under the Protectorate of Richard Cromwell, but both are in basic agreement.[2]

Baxter emphasized first of all that he was forced by fear of physical harm into the Parliamentary camp. Because religiously he was a Puritan, the King's supporters took him for a foe. "The Warre," he maintained, "was begun in our streets before the King or Parliament had any Armies," so that he and most of his friends were forced to flee to the Parliamentary garrisons for safety.[3]

It is not surprising that the King's forces so regarded Baxter and threatened him. The Parish of Kidderminster was divided into two principal population groups. The town proper was an industrial community of weavers who belonged to the class of men Baxter called the "middle sort." These men supported Parliament, and they were the men who had called Baxter to Kidderminster. The other population grouping, however, the gentlemen and their tenants who lived outside the town proper, were supporters of the King. It was this group, along with the King's soldiers, who forced Baxter and most of his friends to flee to Parliamentary garrisons for safety. On one occasion a mob, angered when the Church warden carried out Parliament's order to remove crosses from the Church, would have taken Baxter's life had they been able to lay their hands on him. With the calling up of the armies, "the rage of the rioters grew greater than before," cries of "Down with the Roundheads" and "traitor" greeted Baxter, and "in the Fury of the Rabble" he fled Kidderminster to the Parliamentary city of Gloucester.[1]

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 24-41; A Holy Commonwealth or Political Aphorisms, Opening the True Principles of Government (1659), pp. 456-90. Hereafter cited as HC. Baxter's reasons are summarized in a convenient outline form in Powicke, I, 56-57.

[2] Richard Schlatter is misleading in his suggestion that there is discrepancy in the two accounts. Richard Baxter and Puritan Politics (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 6. Hereafter cited as RB and Puritan Politics. See below pp. 65ff.for a further discussion of this question.

[3] HC, p. 457.

Among the Parliamentary forces Baxter found a warm welcome among a multitude who were forced to flee like himself. In contrast to the King's soldiers, who were called "Damn-me's," he was impressed with the quality of the people in the Parliamentary forces, and this impression played no small part in influencing his decision between the two forces.[2] After only a month at Gloucester he returned to Kidderminster, but once again the fears for his

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1. Reliquiae, I, 40. Cf. HC, pp. 456-57.

2. Reliquiae, I, 39f. Baxter's experience of the anarchy of civil war and the unleashed fury of the Rabble had a profound effect on his political thought. It strengthened his fear of the mob and anarchy and impressed on him the priority of order. He had experienced the anarchy of civil war and tasted the fury of the

safety forced him to flee. This time, after some anxiety, he found haven in the Parliamentary garrison at Coventry, and here he served from the summer of 1643 to the summer of 1645 as Chaplain to the Governor and his troops.

But Baxter had other reasons for joining the Parliamentary forces than the fear of the King's soldiers and the Rabble and his admiration for the quality of the persons in the Parliamentary garrison. While Baxter was yet in Kidderminster he had supported Parliament's "Protestation to defend the King's Person, Honour and Authority, the Power and Privileges of Parliaments, the Liberties of the Subject, and the Protestant Religion, against the common Enemy, meaning the Papists; the Irish Massacre and threatenings occasioning this Protestation."[1] The "threatenings" to which Baxter refers were the ship money case, the calling in of the Northern Army, the attempt to seize the five members of Parliament, and the King's activities which seemed designed to "master and destroy Parliament."[2] "I had reason to believe," wrote Baxter, "that if the King had conquered a Parliament, The Nation had lost all security of their liberties, and been at his Mercy, and not only

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of the mob and resolved to avoid doing so again. Henceforth he particularly feared the "Rabble," and was convinced that in general "Freeholders and Tradesmen are the Strength of Religion and Civility in the Land; and Gentlemen and Beggars, and Servile Tenants, are the Strength of Iniquity." Reliquiae, I, 89. Cf. HC, p. 104.

[1] Reliquiae, I, 40.

[2] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

under his Government."[1]

England, Baxter maintained, was a mixed monarchy in which the Parliament represents the people and by the constitution has a part in the sovereignty. As such, the Parliament has a right to defend the people's liberties and its part in the sovereignty, even against the King.[2] The common good is the end of government, a government being but the means, and "the end being more excellent than the means, is to be preserved by us and no means is to stand in competition with the End."[3] The issues were complex, Baxter later admitted:

> But I then thought that whosoever was faulty, the Peoples Liberties and Safety could not be forfeited . . . . Yea, that if both their Causes had been bad as against each other, yet the Subjects should adhere to that Party which most secured the welfare of the Nation, and might defend the Land under their Conduct, without owning all their Cause. And here I confess I was then so zealous, that I thought it a great Sin for Men that were able to defend their Country, to be Neuters.[4]

Baxter insisted, however, that Parliament did not war against the "Person and Authority of the King," but against "the

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[1] HC, p. 478. Hobbes thought that the weakness of the King's counselors was "only that fault, which was generally in the whole nation, which was, that they thought the government of England was not an absolute but a mixed monarchy; and that if the King should clearly subdue this Parliament; that his power would be what he pleased and theirs as little as he pleased; which they called tyranny." Behemoth, p. 144. Hobbes and Filmer agreed that mixed monarchy is anarchy.

[2] HC, pp. 457ff; Reliquiae, I, 37. [3] HC, p. 480.

[4] Reliquiae, I, 39.

King's misguided will."[1] That is, he did not fight to abolish monarchy or even to remove Charles from office. He supported a struggle to restore what he regarded as the historic constitution of England, "a mixed monarchy," not to establish a new frame of government. Thus the "Good Old Cause," Baxter insisted:

> 1. Was not the Sovereign Power of the People, as above the King, and the Original of Authority; as if the State of the Commonwealth had been Democratical.
> 2. Nor was it to procure a change of the Constitution, and to take down Royalty, and the House of Lords; but clean contrary, it was the Defence of the old Constitution against the changes which they affirmed were attempted.
> 3. Nor was it the altering of Laws, which is not to be done by force but freely by the Law-givers. And, therefore, it was not to procure a cessation of the Magistrates Power in Religion, for encouraging well doers, and restraining intollerable Deceivers, which some call Liberty of Conscience.
> 4. Nor was it to offer any violence to the Person of the King; but to rescue him from them that had seduced him into a Warre against his Parliament, to his peril. These were the Grounds that we were engaged on; and I knew no other.[2]

The Saints Divided

Baxter was to discover, however, that among his compatriots against the King there were those who had different views about the "Good Old Cause" of the Puritan Revolution than did he. During his two year stay at Coventry he occasionally went out into the field with the Army. On one of these trips in June 1645 he visited the Parliamentary Army at Naseby and there for the first time encountered the growing radicalism in the Army.[1] While Baxter and his friends at Coventry thought the war was to restore the constitution of King, Lords, and Commons, he found that the Army radicals "took the King for a Tyrant and an Enemy, and really intended absolutely to master him."[2] Moreover, they were resolved to take down, "by law or without it," "not only Bishops, and Liturgy, and Ceremonies, but all that did not stand in their way," for they were Sectarians who "were far from thinking of a moderate Episcopacy, or any healing way between the Episcopal and the Presbyterian."[3]

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 38; HC, p. 476. [2] Ibid., pp. 481-82.

After his initial shock Baxter began to ask how such ideas had penetrated the Army ranks. First of all he blamed the ministers, including himself, for forsaking the Army for an easier and quieter way of life. Baxter himself had had an invitation from Cromwell to serve as pastor in a Church being gathered in his troop. He had refused the invitation because he opposed Separatism, but now he regretted having lost the opportunity, "for then all the fire was in one spark."[4] Second, he blamed Cromwell for the change in the "Good Old Cause." Cromwell, he believed, deliberately filled the Army with radical or left-wing Puritans, united them under the banner of liberty of conscience, and used them to promote his own interests.[1] But perhaps not all was lost. Baxter was again asked to serve as a Chaplain to the Army, this time, however, not by Cromwell but by Colonel Whalley. Feeling it his public duty to do so and after consultation with his fellow ministers, he accepted the responsibility and set himself "to find out the corruption of the Soldiers; and to discover and dispute them out of their mistakes, both Religious and Political."[2]

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[1] *Reliquiae*, I, 50ff.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 50-51.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 51.

The errors and corruptions of the Army radicals which threatened to "subvert both Church and State" were the doctrines of "State-Democracy," "Church-Democracy," and "Liberty of Conscience."[3] In addition, many of the radicals held heretical religious opinions, particularly the heresy of Antinomianism.[4] From this moment until the Restoration Baxter regarded these men and

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1. Reliquiae, I, 49,59,70,71. 2. Ibid., p. 53. 3. Ibid.

4. Antinomianism has been defined in its extreme form as "the doctrines of extreme fanatics who deny subjection to any law other than the subjective caprice of the empirical individual, though this individual is generally credited as the witness and interpreter of the Holy Spirit." J. Macbride Sterett, "Antinomianism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (13 vols.; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1925-27), I, 582. In 17th Century England it was based on extreme interpretations of the doctrines of free grace and the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the believer. Baxter believed that its denial of the obligation of the law on the believer destroyed the moral imperative of the Gospel and thereby dissolved the bonds of society. Its moral expression was libertinism, its social expression extreme individualism, and its intellectual expression an irrational fanaticism. For background see Gertrude Huehns, Antinomianism in English History, With Special Reference to the Period 1640-1660 (London: Cresset Press, 1951) and Powicke, I, 237-45.

their doctrines as the most perilous immediate danger to all he valued. For Democracy to Baxter meant the rule of the Rabble, mobocracy, and the overthrow of all social subordination and order. Liberty of conscience meant anarchy in the Church and the license to do and to teach evil in the community at large. In short, these men threatened the kind of reformation and society which Baxter desired, a rightly ordered holy commonwealth built upon a holy and concordant Church.

Baxter's goal was a comprehensive national reformed Church which steered between the anarchy of absolute liberty of conscience and the tyranny of persecution and which would serve as the foundation for the erection of a national holy society or community, a holy commonwealth. The Army radicals, however, advocated a strategy which located the holy community, the common ideal of the Puritans, in the voluntary gathered Church rather than in the total community of the nation, a strategy which permitted "reformation without tarrying for any," that is, without tarrying for reform by the magistrate. Indeed, they denied the magistrate the right to undertake the reform of the Church. They asked of the magistrate only liberty to form holy communities in their voluntary but disciplined congregations. Beyond this he could not go. Since Baxter believed that in practice the radicals' strategy would encourage Separatism and thus the disintegration of the English Protestant Church into bickering sects, he felt that he had to defend the ideal of a national Church and an active role for the magistrate in religion. The immediate issues were Church polity and the role of the magistrate in religion, but the basic question was the nature and location of the holy community, for the answer given to this question determined the more immediate issues.[1]

The tension within the Parliamentary forces was further complicated by the tension between the two rallying cries of the Puritan Revolution, liberty and reformation. How could the theocratic thrust toward the reformation of the Church be reconciled with the establishment of political and civil liberty? As Arthur Barker in his penetrating study of the Puritan movement of this period suggests:

> In its larger aspects the history of Puritanism between 1643 and 1660 is the history of conflicting efforts to find definitions of reformation and liberty which would make possible the achievement of both. Puritanism failed to find an acceptable solution. The liberty demanded by the left destroyed the reformation desired by the right, and the reformation desired by the right denied the liberty demanded by the left.[2]

It was on these questions that the Puritan movement was divided and the spectrum of the Puritan parties emerged, the Presbyterian Puritans on the right, Sectarian or left-wing, radical Puritans on the left, and the Independents, the center party of the Puritans, between.[1] The left-wing Puritans like Roger Williams and John Lilburne abandoned the ideal of a national Church, rejected the intrusion of the magistrate into religious affairs, and moved toward democratic views of government.[2] The right-wing Puritans held to a national Church, the involvement of the magistrate in religious affairs, and regarded democracy as subversive and dangerous. Characteristically the Independents, the center party of which Cromwell himself is a representative, falls somewhere between. They held to the idea of the state's establishment of Christianity as the national religion, but the Church was to be composed of independent gathered Churches only loosely related to one another. The magistrate was to suppress intolerable errors, but no one was to be forced into the Church. Again, the Puritans of the center were more conservative politically than the left-wing Levellers but less so than the right-wing Presbyterians, who generally favored the monarchy.

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[1] This interpretation is particularly indebted to Woodhouse, _op_. _cit_., and Troeltsch, _op. cit_., II, 576ff., 656 ff.

[2] _Op_. _cit_., pp. 19-20. This tension is also the theme of Haller, _Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution_.

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[1] For this spectrum and the position of each group see Jordan, II, and Woodhouse, op. cit.

[2] The question of the emergence of the democratic ideals of the left-wing Puritans is not only a critical question in the interpretation of the Puritan movement but of all Calvinistic political thought. In particular, what was the relationship of their political thought to the Calvinistic religious tradition? Were the political ideals of men like Roger Williams and John Lilburne intrinsically related to their Calvinistic theology? For the question in general see the sources cited in footnote 2 p. 6 above, particularly Nichols. See also James Emanuel Ernst, The Political Thought of Roger Williams (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1929) for an argument that there was no intrinsic relationship between Roger's political and religious thought and D. B. Robertson, The Religious Foundations of Leveller Democracy (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951) for an argument that there was such a relationship between the democratic and religious ideals of the left-wing Puritans. For primary sources on left-wing Puritan thought see Woodhouse, op. cit.; William Haller (ed.) Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1647 (3 vols.; Columbia Univ. Press, 1934); and William Haller and Godfrey Davies (eds.), The Leveller Tracts, 1647-1653 (New York:

It is important to emphasize, however, that right and left-wing Puritans should not be absolutely polarized as advocates of ordered reformation and as advocates of civil and religious liberty respectively. In actual practice these divisions were not sharp and fast. Developments were rapid and there was considerable movement between these groups. Some men shared characteristics of several positions and cannot be exactly categorized.[1] Of no one is this more true than Baxter himself, who can hardly be more closely classified than as a conservative Puritan.[2] But most important of all, Puritans of the right and left affirmed the achievement of both liberty and reformation. To be specific, the tension between these two ideals is present within Baxter's own

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Columbia University Press,1944).

[1] It is the existence of the large center group which shared characteristics of both the left and right which is the strongest evidence for continuity within the Puritan movement and which makes the generalization "Puritan" both necessary and possible. See Woodhouse, op. cit., p. 36, and J. A. Hexter, "The Problem of the Presbyterian Independents," American Historical Review, XLIV (1938), 29-49.

[2] As will be later shown, Baxter did not agree completely with any of these groupings and therefore does not fit any of these categories exactly. His position lies somewhere between the Presbyterians and the Independents.

thought as well as in his relationship to other Puritans to his left or right.[1]

The Eclipse of the 'Good Old Cause'

Through 1646 Puritans of the left and right as well as Parliamentary Erastians had been relatively united in the common cause against Laudian Prelacy and Stuart absolutism.[2] Among these groups, the Presbyterians were clearly the dominant force. Cromwell had not yet emerged as the dominant figure he was later to be, the Independents were a small minority in Parliament, and the left-wing Puritans had only begun to assert themselves through their pamphlets, manifestoes, and Army agitators. Early in 1643 Prelacy had been abolished and the Presbyterian dominated Westminster Assembly convened to advise Parliament on a settlement of the Church's doctrine, worship, and government. The Assembly responded with a series of recommendations to Parliament including a Directory of Worship and a basically Presbyterian form of government in 1644, a confession of faith in 1646, and two catechisms

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1. Barker's study of Milton deals with his thought in terms of this tension and his attempts at a resolution of it. Milton exhibits this tension very clearly in his progressive shift from right-wing to left-wing Puritanism. Baxter, however, did not experience such a transition, and the tension is not nearly so manifest in his thought. After the struggle to limit the King and thereby to preserve liberty, Baxter tended to emphasize reformation.

2. For the course of events here condensed see Jordan, III, 44ff.

in 1647. Parliament accepted these recommendations in substance because of the strength of the Presbyterians in Parliament and in London and the Scots, who made their acceptance conditions for their support against the King.

There was, however, growing opposition to this program, particularly to the proposed Presbyterian discipline. The Erastians, Independents, and the left-wing Puritans regarded the Presbyterian discipline with the same distaste as they had Laud's and began to work for a "settlement of the Kingdom" along different lines than the Scots and the Presbyterian Puritans desired. In the Army debates of the summer of 1647 over the settlement of the Kingdom, the left-wing Puritans enunciated their program of liberty of conscience and a democratic government secured by a proposed constitution called The Agreement of the People.[1] The Parliamentary Erastians were equally opposed to the Presbyterian program. They were determined to chain up the clergy, so that Parliament, not the Presbyterian ministers, should control the Church in England.[2]

The dominant group, however, was to be the center party

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1. For these debates and supplementary documents see Woodhouse, op. cit.

2. For the Parliamentary Erastians in general see Allen, English Political Thought, 1603-1660, pp. 339ff, 424ff. See Henry Parker's The True Grounds of Ecclesiastical Regiment (1641) for a full statement of this position. The Parliamentary Erastians held in common with all Erastians that "except one supreme head be alone

of the Puritan movement, the Independents. The Independents were strong in the Army, were favored by Cromwell, and as a center party could muster the support of the left-wing Puritans and the more politically conservative Erastians alike against the imposition of Presbyterianism. Within a short time Cromwell and the Independents had pushed the Presbyterians from the center of the stage, gained control of the machinery of state, and attempted to achieve their vision of the rightly ordered society.

From the summer of 1647 on Baxter was displeased with the course of events.[1] After the defeat of the King's forces in 1646 he hoped that negotiations with the King would lead to a healing of the breach between King and Parliament, Prelatist and Puritan. The Parliament also was inclined to negotiate with the King, but Cromwell and the Army prevented this as well as the imposition of the Presbyterian discipline. The Scots, angered at their former allies, now joined forces with the King and invaded England. Cromwell's Army routed the Scots and emerged as the dominant political

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in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil, human nature musts needs be destitute of those remedies which are necessary for its conservation, since power cannot be divided . . . and being diminished it proves insufficient." Henry Parker, Discourses Concerning Puritans, p. 19, Cited in Allen, ibid., pp. 340-41. They differed from the Royalist Erastians in holding that the Parliament rather than the King was the supreme head of Church and State.

[1] For Baxter's account and evaluation of these events see Reliquiae, I, 59 ff.

power in England. On December 6, 1648, the Presbyterian members of Parliament were purged by the Army, leaving the reduced Rump Parliament. In the course of events that followed Charles was tried and executed, Scotland invaded and subdued when it submitted to Charles II, the Rump Parliament itself dismissed, the Little (Barebones) Parliament convened, and finally Cromwell declared Lord Protector of England.

Baxter protested vigorously against this course of events. The ideas enunciated by the Levellers, who were radical democrats in politics and Sectarian Puritans in religion, in the Army debates and in The Agreement of the People he regarded with horror, just as he had when he first encountered them two years earlier.[1] He refused to take the Rump Parliament's oath of Engagement "to be True and Faithful to the Commonwealth as it is now established without a King or House of Lords," and discouraged others from doing so.[2] He protested against the war against the Scots as a violation of covenant and loyalty and condemned it from the pulpit and in writing.[3] Most of all, Baxter was alienated by the execution of the King.[4]

Because he disagreed with the Army's leaders, Baxter did not return to the Army after a serious illness had temporarily disabled him but returned to Kidderminster in the summer of 1647.

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 59. [2] Ibid., p. 64.

[3] Ibid., p. 66. [4] Ibid., pp. 59, 70-71, 98-99.

There he took up again the ministry which he loved so deeply and which the war had forced him reluctantly to set aside. Here he remained, preaching, teaching, exhorting and writing, except for occasional visits to London, until the Restoration again forced him to leave in 1660.

Baxter's Churchmanship

Baxter's ministry in Kidderminster was such a remarkable success that it has been called "one of the greatest efforts in the pastoral ministry in the history of the church."[1] Whereas when Baxter came to Kidderminster "there was about one Family in a Street that worshipped God and called on his name," when he left "there were some Streets where there was not past one Family on the side of a Street that did not so."[2] This remarkable achievement coupled with his growing reputation as an author brought him into national prominence and gained for him an increasing influence in public affairs.[1] Above all, however, his efforts for Church unity attracted the national attention which led to his emergence as the leading spokesman for the conservative Puritans.

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[1] Charles F. Kemp, _A Pastoral Triumph: The Story of Richard Baxter and His Ministry at Kidderminster_ (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 3. For Baxter's pastoral ministry see also _Reliquiae_, I, 83ff; Richard Baxter, _Gildas Salvianus; or the Reformed Pastor_ (1656), which has become a classic of pastoral care and is available in a modern version, _Gildas Salvianus; or the Re-Pastor_, edited by John T. Wilkinson (London: The Epworth Press, 1950); and Powicke, I, 47-55, 80-114.

[2] _Reliquiae_, I, 84-85.

The Church was always central to Baxter's thought and activities.[2] He had been alienated from the pre-Revolution established order because he believed it threatened the Church's effectiveness in fulfilling its divinely ordained tasks. With the removal of the threat of Stuart absolutism and Laudian Prelacy, another opposing threat to the Church's effectiveness dominated Baxter's thought: the disintegration of the English Church into bickering and divided sects. What was needed above all to stem this threat, he believed, was holiness and concord, particularly a holy and concordant ministry.

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[1] Baxter's first published book, Aphorismes of Justification (1649) immediately plunged him into a sea of theological controversy. The reception of his second book, The Saint's Everlasting Rest (1650), however, won universal acceptance and acclaim. It remains a classic of English devotional literature and along with Baxter's A Call to the Unconverted (1657) ranked second in its appeal only to John Bunyan's writings. The most recent edition is Richard Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, abridged with an introduction by John T. Wilkinson (London: The Epworth Press, 1962).

[2] For Baxter's efforts and proposals to secure unity in the Church see Reliquiae, I, 62, 90; II, 139-50, 191f., 304; III, 23, 61, 157. For studies of his Churchmanship see A. Harold Wood, Church Unity Without Uniformity: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Church Movements and of Richard Baxter's Proposals for a Comprehensive Church (London: The Epworth Press, 1963); Irvonwy Morgan, The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter (London: The Epworth Press, 1946); Hugh Martin, Puritanism and Richard Baxter (London: SCM Press, 1954), pp. 158-66; and Powicke, I, 121ff., 163ff.; II, 185-232. Baxter was a pioneer ecumenist to whom these modern studies turn for inspiration in this modern day of ecumenical dialogue. Baxter made his proposal for Church concord in the very first book he wrote, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, and he tirelessly repeated his attempts no matter how hopeless realization seemed.

As a practical step in this direction, Baxter proposed to the ministers of Worcestershire that they enter into a voluntary association on a design based on as much of Church order and discipline as the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Independent ministers agreed belonged to the pastors of each particular Church. This was effected in 1653 when the majority of ministers joined in what was called the Worcestershire Association and which soon became the model of similar associations in many parts of England. In order to gain a national hearing for his proposals, Baxter published two works that same year. Christian Concord: or the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire set forth the plan and agreement of the Worcestershire Association as an example for others. The Worcestershire Petition to the Parliament for the Ministry of England Defended was a defense of a national Church and ministry against the Sectarians.

Baxter's proposal did not stop with voluntary associations such as the Worcestershire Association, however. To secure the kind of unity he desired in the English Church and Commonwealth, a national Church supported by the civil magistrate was needed. His involvement in politics will be seen to a large degree due to his efforts to secure support from the civil magistrate for this ideal. Baxter's proposal to the magistrate was to steer a middle course between a narrow enforced conformity like Laud's or the Presbyterians' and the anarchy of Sectarian freedom of religion.[1] His plan called for a Church order and creed comprehensive enough to unite moderate members of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, and Sectarian parties, as had been done in Worcestershire, but on the level of a comprehensive national Church. The magistrate would "countenance and maintain" the ministers who worked within the framework of the national Church. Those outside this national Church would be tolerated but not countenanced or maintained. Errors which threatened the "fundamentals" of Christianity would, however, be repressed, though with moderation and avoiding cruelty. The motto which Baxter urged was "in things necessary, Unity; in all things doubtful, Liberty; in all things, Charity." Charity did not extend, of course, to allowing radical Sectarians or Papists to spread their errors.[2]

Baxter believed that a substantial part of the English people would respond to his plea, and he did, indeed, receive promising support. Within a few months of the appearance of his first two books on a national public question, Baxter was summoned to London to counsel with the highest powers in the commonwealth. Baxter the Pastor was about to become Baxter the theoretician of a Holy Commonwealth.

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[1] See below, pp. 70ff., 190ff.

[2] "Epistle Dedicatory to His Highness Richard, Lord Protector," _Five Disputations of Church-Government and Worship_ (1659), pp. 8ff.; "A Letter to Sir Edward Harley, September 15, 1656," in _RB and Puritan Politics_, pp. 46-60. Baxter was not alone in seeking unity on the basis of the "fundamentals" or "essentials" of Christianity. In particular the moderate Episcopalians such as Chillingsworth and Taylor proposed the fundamentals as the basis for unity.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICIAN OF A HOLY COMMONWEALTH

Baxter's proposals for achieving Church concord attracted immediate and widespread attention because he had addressed himself to the most critical public issue of the period in a way that had wide appeal. After the overturn of the pre-Revolution established order by the Parliamentary forces, the question of the shape that the social and political order would take became acute, and disagreement on the question had divided the victors into contending camps.[1] Of the questions at stake, the question of the settlement of the Church was central because it involved the whole structure of the social and political order. This is illustrated by the party names of the period, Erastian, Prelatist, moderate Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Independent, Sectarian, all taken from forms of Church polity.

Baxter's position on this question was a mediating position that found substantial support. As W. K. Jordan says of the position which Baxter advocated:

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[1] See above, pp. 21ff.

> It represented a principle of order which appealed to sober and responsible men, harassed by the steady deterioration of Protestantism into extreme and bickering sects. . . . It appealed particularly to responsible elements of lay opinion that were desperately seeking to coalesce on some orderly, systematic, and disciplined National Establishment which would do a minimum of violence to traditional religious conceptions.[1]

Among the men active in politics to whom Baxter's ideas appealed were Baron Broghill, Colonel John Bridges, Major Thomas Grove, Sir Thomas Rous, Sir Edward Harley, etc. As Richard Schlatter describes them:

> His political friends were men who had supported the Long Parliament against Charles I and who had generally opposed Cromwell's seizure of power, but who had come to think that Cromwell was their protection against radicals who would destroy the whole traditional fabric of English society. In religion, they were Puritans who wanted a state church governed by orthodox ministers and respectable lay elders; socially, they were men of substance who distrusted absolutism, whether of King and Court, or of Cromwell and Major-Generals, but who preferred either of these to radical democrats and levellers who advocated a separation of Church and State and full religious liberty. Their ideal was a limited monarchy, with a Parliament in which the majority of M.P.'s would be Puritan men of property, devoted to the welfare of a reformed Church of England.[2]

Schlatter further points out that Baxter's recommendations to Parliament summarized in a letter to Sir Edward Harley of September 15, 1656, closely coincided with The Humble Petition and

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[1] III, 317.

[2] _RB and Puritan Politics_, p. 10.

Advice, which in May 1657 replaced the Instrument of Government as the "Constitution" of the Commonwealth. Parliament would not grant all Baxter desired, "but in general purpose, Baxter was at one with the conservative Puritan-politicians of 1656."[1]

But Baxter's influence was not limited to a small group of propertied men active in politics. For example, Cromwell's own Chaplain, John Howe, wrote Baxter requesting advice for one in his station on "the maine evills of the nation that you judge capable of redress by the present Governors."[2] So respected was Baxter that one authority on this period says that "Richard Baxter, in his best days, was a stronger power with the religious people of England, than either the Westminster Assembly or the Parliamentary leaders."[3] Baxter had now the influence to assume the role of a leading spokesman for conservative Puritanism not only in regard to religious questions narrowly conceived but on the full range of public questions.

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[1] RB and Puritan Politics, p. 12.

[2] Cited in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Richard Baxter's Correspondence," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, I (1950), 93. Baxter corresponded with many of the most distinguished men in England as well as with some important persons in New England and on the continent and with a multitude of ordinary ministers and lay persons. For this correspondence, see Nuttall, ibid., pp. 85-95, and Powicke, I, 140-52; II, 46-59.

[3] Alexander Gordon, Heads of English Unitarian History, With Appended Lectures on Baxter and Priestley (London: P. Green, 1895), p. 65.

Richard Baxter and the Politics of the Protectorate

Baxter had the opportunity to exercise this role in London in December 1654 and January 1655.[1] He was in London during that time to serve on a committee appointed by Parliament to draw up a list of the "fundamentals" of Christianity which would serve as a test for toleration.[2] But Baxter's activities ranged far beyond his activities in the committee. On December 17, 1654, he preached before Cromwell and many members of Parliament at Westminster. He took full advantage of the opportunity to make known his views on Cromwell's policies. His sermon before Cromwell was "against the Divisions and Destractions of the Church, and showing how mischievous a thing it was for Politicians to maintain such Divisions for their own Ends, that they might fish in troubled waters, and keep the Church by its Divisions in a state of Weakness, lest it should be able to offend them," and "the Necessity and Means of Union."[3]

Baxter clearly intended the sermon as a criticism of

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[1] For Baxter's account of this visit see Reliquiae, II, 197ff. Cf. RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 9-11; and Powicke I, 121-26.

[2] Baxter proposed the ancient Creeds, Lord's Prayer, and Decalogue as containing the fundamentals of Christianity. Reliquiae, II, 198.

[3] Reliquiae, II, 205.

Cromwell, and he took it as such. But he knew of Baxter's influence and tried in two personal conferences to win his support for his policies. But Baxter would not be persuaded. The conferences ended with Cromwell attacking and Baxter defending Parliament, Baxter's friends in particular. And Cromwell and the Army, not Parliament, had the upper hand. Baxter went back to Kidderminster, and Cromwell dismissed Parliament.

There were two basic issues on which Baxter and Cromwell were at odds, and these were the principal topics of their conversations. First there was the question of the legitimacy of Cromwell's regime. Baxter had hoped that negotiations with the King after his defeat would lead to a reconciliation based on a limited monarchy and a broad, comprehensive but united national Church. He blamed Cromwell for thwarting both. In Baxter's eyes Cromwell had executed the King and usurped the government for himself. His second grievance was Cromwell's Church policies. Baxter accused Cromwell of promoting Sectarianism with his policy of religious liberty.

There was little chance of understanding between the two men, for Baxter believed that ambition, not principle, was behind Cromwell's actions. As he described Cromwell's motivation:

> The intelligent sort by this time did fully see that Cromwell's design was, by causing and permitting destruction to hang over us, to necessitate the Nation whether they would or not, to take him for their Governour, that he might be their Protector: Being resolved that we should be saved by him, or perish:

> He made use of the wild headed Sectaries then barely to fight for him: They now serve him as much by their Heresies, their Enmity to Learning and Ministry, their pernicious Demands which tended to Confusion, as they had done before by their Valour in the Field. He can now conjure up at pleasure some terrible apparition, of Agitators, Levellers, or such like, who as they affrighted the King from Hampton-Court, shall affright the People to fly to him for refuge; that the hand that wounded them may heal them. For now he exclaimeth against the giddiness of these unruly Men, and earnestly pleadeth Order and Government, and will needs become the Patron of the Ministry, yet so as to secure all others of their Liberty.[1]

Baxter would never forgive nor consent to Cromwell the "Usurper."

Yet Baxter did not join in any plots to restore Charles II or advocate resistance to Cromwell. At times, as when he served on the Parliamentary committee to draw up the list of fundamentals, he took an active part in public life under Cromwell. He did this, he explained, because he thought this course of action in the best interest of the common good, given the circumstances. Thus, though he could not in good conscience consent to Cromwell's rule, he held submission to be better than any feasible alternative; that is, the alternatives of a war to restore Charles II, or the establishment of a Leveller, Sectarian democracy.[2]

Moreover, Baxter was not without appreciation for certain aspects of Cromwell's rule. Under Cromwell he had full freedom to publish and to preach.[1] Cromwell did keep up a public profession to encourage the Church and godliness and did much good. In particular, Baxter approved of the work that was undertaken under Cromwell to reform the ministry and actively cooperated with the Committee of Triers, the body given the responsibility of improving the quality of the ministry. Finally, he was all the more reluctant to work for the King's restoration because he believed that the vengefulness of those who had adhered to the King would lead them to undo the good done by Cromwell.[2] Thus, whatever other men might do, Baxter had chosen his course of action: to disown the Usurpation but to commend and encourage any good the Usurper did and to leave the results to God.[3] In effect he acknowledged Cromwell's regime as de facto but not de jure.

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[1] *Reliquiae*, I, 70-71. F. J. Powicke suggests "the warping effect of an inverterate prejudice" in Baxter's estimate of Cromwell. Powicke, I, 115.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Example, Exhortation, and Defense of Holiness

Baxter did not return to London for political purposes until the eve of the Restoration in 1660. He chose rather to exercise his influence and talent by personal endeavor in Kidderminster and elsewhere through his writing. By nourishing a godly and concordant community in Kidderminster he was creating a model holy community. From his pen there flowed a steady stream of words of example, exhortation, and polemics.

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[1] With one exception, an assize sermon which the High Sheriff had asked him to preach and then sent word requesting him not to preach because Baxter "preached against the State." Reliquiae, I, 67.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

Some of these writings set forth his positive ideals of holiness and how to attain it in individual lives and in Church and Commonwealth. In 1655 he published two assize sermons, the counterpart of the very influential election day sermon in Puritan New England, entitled True Christianity or Christ's Absolute Dominion and Man's Necessary Self-resignation and Subjection, setting forth the theocratic ideal of God's sovereignty over the totality of man's life, including his political life. Gildas Salvianus; or the Reformed Pastor (1656), a work on the renewal of the Church through a reformed ministry, made available the experience, method and ideals which had had such remarkable effects in Kidderminster. The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ (1658) is a statement of the Puritan ethic for "Nobles, gentlemen and all the rich." A Treatise of Conversion (1657) was published especially "for the grossly ignorant and ungodly." More directly relevent to politics was Direction to Justices of Peace (1657), which directs them as to their responsibilities.

In addition to these and other writings setting forth his positive proposals and ideals, Baxter published a number of defensive works. The greatest dangers to his ideal of a holy society were the growth of secularism (personified to Baxter in Thomas

Hobbes), antinomianism and radical individualism growing out of the extreme doctrines of free grace and conscience, the continuing Prelatist and Papist threats, the growing disunity and proliferation of sects in the English Church, and Democratic politicians like the Levellers, Vane, and Harrington. Accepting fully the responsibility of acting as theoretician of the conservative Puritans, Baxter addressed himself to each of these perils.

The secular and materialistic thought of which Hobbes was the most able proponent had only a small numerical following, but Baxter regarded it as a "mortal pestilence."[1] He deplored the fact that many of "the younger sort of ingenious men" were attracted to Hobbes, as well as to Spinoza and Descartes.[2] The Stoics and Platonists, he felt, were more compatible to Christianity and reason alike than were Hobbes, Spinoza, and Descartes. The Unreasonableness of Infidelity (1655) was the first of his attempts at a Christian answer on the basis of reason to the new philosophy. Later he wrote the more comprehensive The Reasons of the Christian Religion (1667) and More Reasons of the Christian Religion (1672). The latter was a respectful answer to the moderate Deist Lord Herbert.

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[1] The Unreasonableness of Infidelity (1655), Works, XX, xxii.

[2] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 421. Cf. RB and Puritan Politics, p. 15, footnote 8; and James McJunkin Phillips, "Between Conscience and the Law: the Ethics of Richard Baxter (1615-1691)" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1958), pp. 15ff.

Rich. Baxter's Confession of His Faith (1955) and the earlier Aphorismes of Justification (1649) were directed at antinomianism, which Baxter considered a threat because its subjectivism and its rejection of the obligation of the moral law on the Christian undermined all morality and order.[1]

In 1658 he published Five Disputations of Church-Government and Worship defending the Reformed ministry and worship. In particular, he sought to show that it was not necessary to restore Diocesan Episcopacy, as the advocates of the divine right of Episcopacy held.

The Papist threat received extended attack. The Safe Religion, or Three Disputations for the Reformed Catholike Religion against Popery appeared in 1658 to be followed shortly by A Key for Catholicks (1659) and much later by The Difference Between the Power of Magistrates and Church-Pastors and the Roman Kingdom and Magistracy (1671) and Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction, Which Would Be to England Its Perjury, Church Ruine, and Slavery (1691). The purpose of these works was to awaken men to the danger of the Papist threat, religious and political, and to refute the Papal pretensions. The first two of the above works attempt to prove "that Popery is against the Holy Scriptures, the Unity of the Catholike Church, the consent of the Antient Doctors, the

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1. See below, pp. 116ff.

plainest Reason and common judgement of sense itself."[1] The latter two attack the Popish political pretensions. The key stone of Baxter's argument against Papal claims to sovereignty is an analysis of the civil and spiritual jurisdictions which emphasizes the independence of the former and the purely spiritual nature of the latter. Finally Baxter argued that "a universal human monarchy is impossible, it being beyond the capacity of anyone to so govern; the more to blame the Pope for pretending to it; God only can govern all the world."[2]

Baxter's politics cannot be understood apart from this fear of Popery.[3] He thought that as a religion the Roman errors and corruptions threatened men's souls. As a political system it threatened men's liberties and was subversive of all other government.[4] Baxter's fear of the Papists was very general in the Seventeenth Century. The earlier Spanish threat, the sufferings under Mary, the negotiations for a French or Spanish wife for

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[1] The Safe Religion, or Three Disputations for the Reformed Catholike Religion against Popery (1658), Title Page.

[2] Cited in RB and Puritan Politics, p. 23.

[3] For discussions of Baxter's attitude toward Popery see Powicke, II, 128-35, and RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 24-25, 36-37.

[4] To Baxter the essence of Popery was the claim to "Universal Humane Church Sovereignty." "For Popery is but the Invading of the powers of all other Bishops and Kings; and for each one to reassume his own power is the direct deposing of the Pope." Of National Churches (1691), pp. 41, 49.

Charles, etc., were still fresh in men's minds. The wars of religion on the continent, the power and influence of France, and the continuing efforts by the Papists, particularly the Jesuits, to convert Englishmen kept the threat alive. The threat may be easy to dismiss in retrospect, but in the Seventeenth Century, "On a world scale two ideologies were in conflict, and it was by no means clear that Protestantism was not going to be driven under, as so many heresies had been before."[1] Indeed, in regard to Popery as a religion, Baxter was less harsh in his judgement than many contemporary Protestants.[2] Yet his fear of a Popish plot to bring England back under Papal jurisdiction reached the point of an obsession. Baxter's conviction that the Democrats and Sectarians were the tools of the Papists is particularly strange to modern minds.[3]

The most immediate threat in 1658-1659 came from the Democrats. In 1658 Oliver Cromwell died. The next three years were to be the most confused since the Civil War itself. In this confusion the Army was a power to be reckoned with, and since the

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[1] Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, p. 49.

[2] Not only did he believe that the Roman Church's teachings were often unfairly represented and were closer than generally supposed to Protestant doctrine, that there were very many devout Roman Christians, that God had made use of Rome's grandeur, unity and concord, but that peace and even inter-communion between Papists and Protestants was desirable and possible. A Key for Catholicks (1659), pp. 367ff.; Powicke, II, 264-66.

[3] See below, pp. 73ff.

Army was dominated by radicals, the possibility of a "heretical democracy" became very real. Yet Baxter did not see Oliver's death as a threat but as an opportunity. For the succession of Oliver's son Richard as Lord Protector gave Baxter hope that his program of achieving a holy commonwealth might be put into effect. Oliver was inseparably connected in Baxter's mind with regicide, usurpation, self-seeking, and the encouragement of Separatism. But he had no such feeling toward Richard and concluded that he could consent to Richard, something he had never done in regard to Oliver.[1]

Attempt at a Holy Commonwealth

With the hope of encouraging Richard to pursue policies aimed at achieving a holy commonwealth, Baxter dedicated the two books he was about to publish against Prelacy and Popery, Five Disputations of Church-Government (1659) and A Key for Catholicks (1659), to him. The sum of his advice to Richard was to work for holiness and concord in the Church, to encourage godliness, to suppress Papist propaganda, blasphemous books and the rapidly proliferating sects, and to beware of "Democraticall Politicians, that . . . would bring all into confusion under pretense of the People's Liberty or Power, and would have the Major Part of the Subjects to be Sovereign of the rest."[1]

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[1] As Baxter cautiously expressed his attitude after the Restoration when he was under attack for his support of Richard: "Many sober Men that called his Father no better than a Trayterous Hypocrite, did begin to think that they owed him Subjection." Reliquiae, I, 100.

With the same intent he wrote a letter to John Swinfen, probably in February 1659, advising Swinfen, a member of Richard's Parliament, on the course he should pursue in that Parliament.[2] In this letter, Baxter expressed concern about the dangers from Papists, Democrats, and from future Parliaments which would be elected by the majority, whom Baxter feared, remembering the fury of the Rabble in the Civil War. But he also spoke of "this extraordinary opportunity to secure the succession of Religion." This could best be secured, he advised Swinfen, by a well regulated election which would secure a succession of wise, godly, honest men. In addition to this concrete advice, Baxter briefly summarized his political theory.

Baxter's thoughts and ideas about politics are most fully enunciated in another work written at this time, his most comprehensive political work, A Holy Commonwealth. For several years he had been studying and writing on the fringes of political theory. His debates with the radical democrats in the Army, his writings on the Church question, his analysis of the Papal political claims,

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1. "Epistle Dedicatory," A Key for Catholicks. Cited in RB and Puritan Politics, p. 13.

2. Printed in RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 61-67.

and his increasing involvement in politics had compelled him to move ever deeper into political theory. The catalog of his library and the citations of his writings demonstrate that he was deeply versed in ancient and contemporary political thought.[1] Given his proclivity for writing, it was probably inevitable that he would write a comprehensive work setting forth his political thought. The rush of events, however, made him pick up his pen perhaps earlier than he otherwise would have.

Baxter attributed the occasion for writing A Holy Commonwealth to the invitation of James Harrington.[2] In the "Dedicatory Epistle" to The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ (1658) Baxter had touched upon Harrington's Oceana, Sir Henry Vane's party's attempt for a "Sectarian Democratical Model," and Hobbes's Leviathan. Harrington replied to this by printing "half a sheet of foolish jeers," and this provoked Baxter "to give the world and him an account of my political principles . . . which I did in that book called . . . A Holy Commonwealth."[1]

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[1] Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, II (1951), 207-221; and III (1952), 74-100. Among the writers Baxter quotes are Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Suarez, Campanella, Bodin, Grotius, Althusias, Bilson, Hooker, Hobbes, Harrington, George Lawson, etc. He says that he learned more from Grotius and George Lawson than from any others. Reliquiae, I, 107-08. Cf. RB and Puritan Politics, p. 15, footnote 8. Lawson's most important political works were An Examination of the Political Part of Mr. Hobbs His 'Leviathan' (1657) and Politica Sacra et Civilis (1660). His thought is briefly discussed in John Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), pp. 86ff.

[2] HC, Title Page; Cf. Reliquiae, I, 118-19; III, 71-72. For the background and an introduction to the book see Julius Peter Jaeger, "An Introduction to Richard Baxter's A Holy Commonwealth." (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1935).

The broader occasion, however, was Richard's succession in the Protectorate and the hope that this gave Baxter for a settlement of England along the lines desired by him and the conservative Puritans that he represented. A Holy Commonwealth was written to further the realization of this hope. Thus when the radicals through their control of the Army forced out Richard and his Parliament before Baxter had finished A Holy Commonwealth, he wrote the date the Parliament had been dismissed, April 25, 1659, abandoned writing the final section and began a meditation on the mystery of the providence of God in which he expressed his consternation at this turn of events. "We find ourselves," he wrote, "in the tempetuous Ocean, When even now we thought we had been almost at the shore."[2]

The book is therefore not a utopia or an abstract treatise on political theory but Baxter's principles and program "for the healing of the mistakes and resolving the doubts that most endanger and trouble England at this time," as the title page puts it. This is perhaps most evident in Chapter Nine, "How a Commonwealth may be reduced to this Theocratic temper if it have advantages, and the Rulers and People are willing," where Baxter gives his

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1. Reliquiae, I, 118; III, 71. 2. HC, p. 492.

program for realizing his ideal of a theocracy in England under the favorable conditions of Richard's Protectorate.

After Richard's fall the circumstances were so greatly changed that there was little chance for the settlement which Baxter had hoped to further by writing A Holy Commonwealth. But he decided to publish it anyway without altering a word. In recognition of the changed circumstances, however, he included three additions to the book besides the closing meditation.

The first and most important is a long Preface "to all those in the Army or elsewhere, that have caused our many and great Eclipses since 1646."[1] It will be recalled that in 1646 the radicals in the Army began to assert themselves and that Baxter was unhappy with the course of events that followed.[2] In this Preface Baxter reminds the radicals of these "Eclipses," e.g. the execution of the King and the purging of the Presbyterians in the Long Parliament, for which he holds them responsible. He accuses them of resisting the "Best Governours (as to Wisdome and

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[1] The second is "An Addition to the Preface" which attempts to refute the theory used to defend the Army's right to force out Richard and his Parliament and the theory of religious liberty. The third addition is a summary of Papist writings on how to restore Popery. Baxter no doubt included this addition because he felt the anarchy which followed the forcing out of Richard and his Parliament discredited and weakened the Puritan Protestant cause and thereby made the return of England to Popery more likely. See below, pp. 73-74.

[2] See above, pp. 21ff.

Holinesse conjunct)" governing on earth, by which he meant the Long Parliament and probably also Richard's Parliament.

Baxter's plea in this Preface represents a different strategy from that of the body of A Holy Commonwealth. Whereas the body of a Holy Commonwealth is Baxter's full or optimum political program, the Preface gives the minimal program which he hopes to salvage from the debacle. In a conciliatory tone he asks three things of the Army radicals now that they control the helm of the ship of state: that they be tender of consciences, especially in imposing oaths; that they work for the interest of Christ, particularly in striving for a "Holy and Concordant Ministry" and in the "restraint of the seducing enemies of Christ," Infidelity, and Popery; and finally that "a Succession of wise and godly men may be secured to the Nation in the Highest Power."[1]

Baxter was astute enough to recognize that the last real hope of conservative Puritans for structuring English society as they hoped was gone. His recognition of the changed conditions is most explicit in a letter of 1660 to Thomas Bampfield, who had been Speaker in Richard's Parliament, in answer to Bampfield's request for advice for a declaration on religion to be introduced in the Convention Parliament.[2] Baxter answered Bampfield's inquiry by asking, "Who shall now make such laws as these?"[1] Rather than expecting such legislation, Baxter was rather "preparing for sufferings upon the account of this very doctrine, and looking with grief on the Protestant cause throughout the Christian world, as bleeding at the wound that is given it by its friends in England."[2]

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[1] The pages of the Preface are unnumbered.

[2] Bampfield's letter, dated March 26, 1660, and Baxter's answer, dated April 4, 1660, are printed in RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 139-145.

Richard Baxter and the Restoration

The year that followed Richard's downfall was chaotic. The Army radicals had the power to force Richard out, but they could not effectively rule England themselves. It was soon evident that England's choice was between government by the radicals and the restoration of the monarchy. Faced with this choice, the conservative Puritans decided to join with the Royalists in an effort to restore the King. In the meantime, Baxter's political opponents, men like Harrington and Vane, had the ascendency through their control of the Army. It is not surprising that Baxter did not play an active role in politics during this period. He did write a treatise against the radicals' political program, _An Answer to the Overturners and New Modelers of the Government about A Senate, Toleration and Tithes_, but he did not publish it.[3] And although Baxter preferred the King to the radicals, he did not take a part in restoring the King until the very last moment before the final decision to restore the monarchy. Baxter knew that the return of the King would also be the return of Prelacy and would entail suffering for him and his kind. With such choices he could only regard himself as "a very willing but useless servant (in such weather at such a season)."[1]

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[1] "Letter to Thomas Bampfield," p. 140. [2] _Ibid_.

[3] For the occasion of this pamphlet see _RB and Puritan Politics_, pp. 16-17. The pamphlet is printed in _ibid_., pp. 125-38.

Those who were working for the restoration of the King knew how valuable an ally Baxter would be for their cause, however, and were anxious to secure his support.[2] In particular, the Presbyterian Royalist the Earl of Lauderdale, with whom Baxter had been in correspondence for some time, was working to secure Baxter's assent to the King's return. In order to meet with Lauderdale, Baxter went up to London in April 1660. Lauderdale gave Baxter assurances as to Charles' religion, tried to alleviate his fears of Prelatical tyranny, and above all, appealed to Baxter's loyalty to monarchy and England's traditional constitution. His hope was that Baxter would use his "utmost interest, that the King might be restored by means of the Presbyterians, etc."[3] Powicke suggests: "Altogether, one figures Baxter at this juncture, as in a state of considerable distraction -- drawn between a loyalty to the King which he thought his first duty, and a dread of the evil consequences to things of greater price which his loyalty might entail."[1]

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[1] "Letter to Thomas Bampfield," p. 141. Cf. Reliquiae, II, 207-08, 214ff.; RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 17-19.

[2] Reliquiae, II, 207-08, 214ff. Cf. RB and Puritan Politics, p. 19; and Powicke, I, 189ff.

[3] Reliquiae, II, 215.

Whether from this loyalty or from a belief in the inevitability of the restoration, Baxter did assent to the King's return and began to participate actively in the events which led up to and followed it. On April 30, the day before the vote to restore the King, Baxter preached to the House of Commons, and on May 10, a Day of Thanksgiving, he was selected by the Lord Mayor to preach a sermon of rejoicing at St. Paul's. After the King's return, he was made a Chaplain to the King, offered a Bishopric (which he refused), preached to the King in Whitehall, conferred with the King about the state of the Church, and was a principal figure in the conferences which were seeking an ecclesiastical settlement.[2]

Baxter's major concern during this critical period was the cause which was always the center of his interest and involvement in public life, Church concord, and he was determined to do all he could to achieve it. In his sermon before Parliament he preached on conciliation and compromise, pleading for charity between

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1. Powicke, I, 191. 2. Reliquiae, II, 217-18, 229ff.

Independents, Presbyterians, and Prelatists. He entered into conversations with Episcopal divines about the grounds of concord, and when he was granted audience with the King he spoke plainly and forcefully about what needed to be done.

It has been said that the Puritan was on his knees before God and on his feet before men. Of no one was this more true than of Baxter. As he had preached and spoken bluntly to Cromwell, so did he now to Charles II.[1] In a conference with Charles he began by expressing his earnest desire for a "happy union" and his "longing for Concord." But not being one to speak in generalities he made plain the conditions which would be necessary to achieve this. The religious people for whom he spoke, he told the King, "had their eyes on him as the officer of God, to defend them in the possession of their helps of their salvation."[2] Cromwell and his party had "so well understood their own Interests, that to promote it, they had found the way of doing good, to be the most effectual means," and the King should "outdo them in doing good."[3] He urged the King not to be tempted to undo the good done under Cromwell, particularly not to "discountenance a faithful Ministry, because his Enemies had set them up" and not to intrude unworthy men upon the people in their places. To encourage unity, only things necessary should be required and enforced, thereby avoiding oppressing men's consciences. The people should be allowed to keep their faithful pastors, and true Church discipline should be exercised, thereby discouraging separatism.[1] As in his address in the preface of A Holy Commonwealth to the Army radicals, Baxter was pleading for what he thought were the minimal conditions for achieving Church concord.

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[1] His sermon before the Court at Whitehall was a powerful but very blunt appeal to turn from the sensual life to the life of faith. The sermon is found as the first part of _The Life of Faith_, _Works_, XII, 1-53.

[2] _Reliquiae_, II, 230.

[3] _Ibid_.

Baxter reports that although in speaking so plainly he had exercised "more boldness than afterwards would have been borne," the King gave a gracious answer "professing his gladness to hear our inclination to agreement, and his resolution to do his part to bring us together."[2] As an outcome of this resolution, the King arranged for Baxter and his party to meet first among themselves and then with the Bishops to try to arrange the terms of Church concord.[3]

It was evident from the beginning of the negotiations, however, that what Baxter had feared would come to pass. The Bishops, firmly seated in power, had no intention of compromising with the Puritans. Moreover, Baxter, for all his good intentions, was not a statesman. He had no experience at negotiating, and his tactlessness and proclivity for prolix, hair-splitting debate caused him to be ineffective at this most critical time in the life of the English Church. As a consequence the conference rapidly degenerated to the level of petty bickering and recrimination. The King was yet favorably disposed toward compromise, but party spirit was too strong for his irresolute abilities. As a final complication, Baxter himself no doubt cooled the King's inclination to urge the Bishops to compromise by himself opposing toleration for the Papists and Socinians.

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[1] Reliquiae, II, 230. [2] Ibid., pp. 230-31.

[3] The conference among the conservative Puritans, loosely called Presbyterians, met at Sion College, and the later conference between them and the Prelates met at the Savoy Palace, the conferences taking the names of the meeting places. Ibid., pp. 231ff.

Relationships degenerated so rapidly between the Puritans and the Prelatists that although Baxter had earlier been offered a Bishopric, he was not permitted to return to his beloved Kidderminster even as a curate. When the new Parliament and Convocation convened, the Prelatists lost no time in taking vengeance. In May 1662 the Act of Uniformity, the first of the laws of the Clarendon Code against Nonconformists, received the King's assent. The law required, among other things, a denunciation of the Solemn League and Covenant and an oath of ministers giving full assent to the Prayer Book and that "it is not lawful, upon any pretense whatsoever, to take arms against the King."[1] Baxter could not in conscience give his assent and so was forced, along with hundreds of other Puritan ministers, into dissent. The Act of Uniformity was only the beginning. The Coventicle Act, the Five Mile Act, and the Second Coventicle Act which followed it imposed severe penalties for dissent. At the very best, the Puritans were largely shut out from participation in the public life of the nation.

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[1] Henry Gee and William J. Hardy, Documents Illustrative of English Church History (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921), pp. 600-19.

Baxter's last thirty years have been called "a striking example of the repressed life."[1] As a prominent leader of Puritan Nonconformity, his treatment largely depended upon the policies in force against Dissenters. When they were in disfavor, Baxter was singled out to be made an example, and the Acts against Dissent stood ready for that purpose. On two occasions he was imprisoned, and often he was threatened and put under bond. At other times, when the climate for Dissenters was more favorable and the laws were not enforced, Baxter found opportunity to be active in writing and preaching. Because of his reputation and influence, he was never without friends in high places nor without a national hearing.

But at best his was a repressed life. His hope of a holy and concordant Church which would serve as the foundation of a holy society was denied by the hardening cleavages in the English Church. He had disavowed Separatism and defended a national establishment under Charles I, Cromwell, and now Charles II. But after 1662 he was compelled to live outside the established ministry. Denied his greatest immediate desire, to return to his pastorate at Kidderminster, continually under attack and the victim of suspicion and rumor, he was compelled to flee from place to place and thus deprived even of the comfort of his books. For the remainder of his life he was preached and written against.[1] In particular, his A Holy Commonwealth was attacked as seditious and finally was condemned and burned at Oxford in 1683.

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[1] Powicke, II, 7.

Baxter faced these very difficult circumstances without bitterness and with great courage. "If Passion made me lose my Love, or my Religion," he explained, "the loss will be my own."[2] He refused, therefore, to allow the immoderation of the times to destroy his moderation. Under the fury of the attacks made upon him he did consider going abroad in order to be at peace but finally put this temptation aside because he believed he could be of greater service to God and the common good by remaining in England. Much to the dislike of the Separatists, who hoped that his treatment at the hands of the Bishops would convince him to make a definite break with the established Church, he attended and took Communion in its parish Churches whenever he could. He could not exercise the office of minister in it, but he still considered himself a member and welcomed every advance from either Prelatists or Separatists which would unite all in it. As to his own conduct, he resolved, as far as his conscience would allow him, to say or do nothing which would prevent and to do all he could to promote this.[1]

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[1] Baxter estimated that there were about fifty writings, in whole or part, written against him. A Saint or a Brute (1662), Works, X, iii; and Reliquiae, I, 106. Among these writings which touch on his politics are Henry Stubbs, A Vindication of the Prudent and Honourable Knight, Sir Henry Vane, from the Lies and Calumnies of Mr. Richard Baxter (1659); John Rogers, Christian Concertation with Mr. Prynne, Mr. Baxter and Mr. Harrington, for the True Cause of the Commonwealth (1659); Thomas Tompkins, The Rebels Plea (1669); George Morley, The Bishop of Worcester's Letter to a Friend (1662); Roger L'Estrange, The Casuist Uncas'd (1680); Edward Petit, Visions of Government (1684); and Thomas Long, A Review of Mr. Baxter's Life (1697). Stubbs was a democrat. Rogers was a Fifth Monarchist. The others were Anglican Royalists. They were united only in attacking Baxter and his ideals. See Orme, The Life and Times of Richard Baxter, Works, I, 703-15.

[2] Reliquiae, III, 59.

The Dispossessed Writer

Under the conditions of the Restoration, Baxter's greatest opportunity for usefulness was through writing.[2] In relation to political questions, however, even this means of participating in public life was severely limited since there were many pressures that discouraged him from writing on politics. First of all, until censorship laws were relaxed in 1679 he had great difficulty in getting anything at all controversial published.[1] But even when it was possible for him to publish on politics, he was reluctant to do so. His political principles as published in his pre-Restoration writings were under heavy attack, and he realized that further publication would accomplish no good but rather would only feed the fires of controversy. Indeed, the vehement attacks on his A Holy Commonwealth so distressed him that he publicly repented of having written it and even concluded that it was best "for Ministers, to meddle as little as may be with Matters of Polity, how great soever their Provocations may be: and therefore I wish that I had never written on any such subject."[2]

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[1] Powicke, II, 7-8, 15ff.

[2] Powicke estimates that Baxter wrote fifteen or sixteen books, not counting pamphlets, between 1663 and 1672 alone. Ibid., p. 62.

He did not, however, cease writing on politics. He merely became more cautious, defensive, and selective in his treatment of political questions.[3] Indeed, some of his most important writings on politics were done after the Restoration. Several factors might be cited for this. First of all he felt compelled to answer the attacks made upon his earlier political activities and ideas

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1. One of Baxter's most severe critics, Sir Roger L'Estrange, was overseer of the licensing of the press so that the laws were applied with particular strictness to Baxter. See Powicke, II, 136-43.

2. Reliquiae, III, 71-72. Baxter had repented of having written A Holy Commonwealth in the Preface of his The Life of Faith (1670).

3. In one of the most important of the works of this period which touches on politics, Baxter calls attention to his omission of a discussion of some very important political issues and explains that he had omitted this discussion lest he be thought to meddle and because those who teach rulers must be those whom they

and so wrote in self defense. Second, he was led into discussion of political questions through writing on subjects which were inextricably related to politics. There were a number of such subjects. His post-Restoration writings on the Church question and on the Papist controversy involved him in politics just as they had before the Restoration because they were very much political questions. In ethical writings he wrote on politics because he believed ethics necessarily includes a treatment of politics. Finally, the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 offered him the freedom and occasion to openly and frankly express his views on politics, something he had not been able to do since the Restoration.[1]

Baxter's post-Restoration writings in which he defends his earlier political principles and activities in answer to the attacks made upon them are essential for a clear understanding of how he regarded those earlier principles and activities in retrospect. There is need of clarification because the evasiveness of Baxter's post-Restoration writings and the revocation of A Holy Commonwealth create some doubt of his continued approval of them. Thus in the writing which is most purely of this defensive type,

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will hear, which was not then his case. CD, VI, 2, 12-13.

[1] Conspicuously missing are the letters of counsel of the type Baxter had written to prominent politicians during the Interregnum. He was no longer consulted on such questions by active politicians. Perhaps, as Schlatter surmises, ". . . he sensed that a secular age had dawned 'when gentlemen think us ministers such fools in Politics that they will disdain to be told by us so to do.'" RB and Puritan Politics, p. 20.

his answer to a decree of the University of Oxford condemning his A Holy Commonwealth along with the works of a number of other writers as false, seditious, and impious, he begins by consenting to the burning of the book, so far, he says, is he from vindicating it.[1]

A careful reading, however, shows that Baxter actually retracts none of his former political principles.[2] He turns aside most of the charges with ironic and sarcastic humor by showing that his teaching was being misrepresented, in some cases as completely contrary to what it actually was.[3] As to the condemned doctrines he admits having held, e.g. that "Parliament had a part in Legislation," that "there is a mutual compact tacit or express between a Prince and his subjects," and that "*de jure* there is no human government unlimited, because God the giver of all power hath limited it both in legislation, judgment, and execution: and *de facto* to claim it is tyranny and nullity," far from renouncing these, he defends them, although in a restrained tone.[1]

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[1] *A Sheet in Reference to the Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford Passed in Their Convocation This July 21, 1683* (1683), in *RB and Puritan Politics*, pp. 147-56.

[2] The one possible exception to this is his former belief that "King Charles the First made war upon his Parliament," and this is more a "fact" than a political principle.

[3] E.g., "Possession and Strength give a right to govern, and success in a cause or enterprise proclaims it to be lawful and just. To pursue it is to comply with the will of God, because it is to follow the conduct of his providence," Baxter had explicitly argued against this principle. *Ibid*., p. 149.

A much more significant source for Baxter's pre-Restoration thought and activities and his later attitude toward them is his autobiography, the Reliquiae Baxterianae. Baxter wrote the Reliquiae for posterity, but he wrote it with his contemporary critics in mind and with the intention of answering their charges against him.[2] This is evident in the Reliquiae's points of emphasis. Since Baxter's support of the Parliamentary forces, his relationship to the Cromwellian regimes, and his activities at the time of Charles II's Restoration were the center of the charges against him, these are treated with particular detail, the Church question and his relationship to it receiving the greatest attention of all. Indeed, the sections on the Restoration period contain little else of public affairs beyond the Church question.[3]

What, then, is the evidence from this more comprehensive source about the continuity between Baxter's later and earlier political principles? The first point to be made is that a comparison of Baxter's interpretation of and his professed reasons for supporting the Parliamentary cause in the _Reliquiae_ with that of the earlier _A Holy Commonwealth_ shows that the two accounts are in essential agreement. The question now remains whether Baxter yet approved of his support of that cause. Baxter inferentially answers this question in his account of the Revolution[1] and explicitly replies to it in a later passage occasioned by the interpretation many were putting on his revocation of _A Holy Commonwealth_.[2] This revocation had made many think, he says, that he had changed his judgment about the first part of the Parliament's cause, that is, the course of events through 1646. But, he makes clear, such an inference should not be drawn from the revocation of the book; for he had not found many errors in the book and had only revoked having written it, not the doctrine contained in it.[3]

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[1] A Sheet in Reference to the Judgment of the University of Oxford, pp. 149, 151, 153.

[2] Baxter undertook this review of his life, however, in an objective and elevated way so that his first purpose was not polemics but clarification. Because of this intention the Reliquiae is an exceptional work which is a standard primary source not only for the study of Baxter but for the Seventeenth Century. Its continuing value is evidenced in its republication in the Everyman series in an abridged edition edited by J. M. Lloyd Thomas, The Autiobiography of Richard Baxter, Being the Reliquiae Baxterianae (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1931). Baxter wrote most of the Reliquiae in the period 1664-70 but continued to make additions to it into the 1680's.

[3] This choice and balance of topics also demonstrates the accuracy of the assertion that Baxter's public life was dominated

The final and conclusive evidence of Baxter's continuing faithfulness to the political principles which had led him to

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by the Puritan Revolution and its aftermath and that the Church question is the key to his public concerns and activities.

[1] "I have been tempted," he concludes this account, "since to think that I was a more competent Judge upon the Place, when all things were before our eyes, than I am in the review of those Days and Actions so many years after, when Distance disadvantageth the Apprehension." _Reliquiae_, I, 39.

[2] _Ibid_., III, 71-72.

[3] _Ibid_.

support the Parliamentary cause in the Puritan Revolution was his response to the events which led up to and followed the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Charles II was succeeded in 1685 by his avowedly Papist brother, James II, who appeared to intend to master Parliament and return England to Popery. Those who subscribed to absolutism of either the Hobbesian or of the Divine Right-passive resistance types had the choice of either abandoning those principles or standing helplessly by while James carried out this intention.

Baxter's response was to assume the stance he had taken in the Puritan Revolution. Specifically, he supported the Glorious Revolution and wrote a tract, King James His Abdication Plainly Proved (October 1, 1691),[1] employing the principles he had used in the earlier period. The evidence, then, suggests that there can be little question of Baxter's continued approval of his earlier political actions and principles.

This is not to say, however, that there was no development in Baxter's thought, for some modifications are discernible. His hopes of the degree of reform which could be achieved in society were less ambitious than earlier. Baxter was never a utopian and had consistently opposed the enthusiastic ambitions of the radicals. After the failure of the attempt at a holy commonwealth and the Restoration he wrote, "I am farther than ever

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[1] In RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 157-78.

I was from expecting great matters of Unity, Splendor or Prosperity of the Church on Earth or that Saints should dream of a Kingdom of this world, or flatter themselves with the hopes of a Golden Age . . ."[1]

Moreover, he further limited the effectiveness of compulsion in promoting religion and became more understanding of the arguments for toleration.[2] He wrote:

> Yea, and I shall add this much more for the sake of Posterity, that as much as I have said and written against Licentiousness in Religion, and for the Magistrates Power in it, and though I think that Land most happy, whose Rulers use their Authority for Christ, as well as for Civil Peace; yet in Comparison of the rest of the World, I shall think that Land happy that hath but bare Liberty to be as good as they are willing to be.[3]

Thus, whereas he had opposed Cromwell's religious policies as being too tolerant, he now substantially endorsed them.[4] Yet, at the same time, he moved toward a more tightly structured national Church and held back from universal freedom of religion.

The acceptance of a more tightly structured national Church grew out of Baxter's continual involvement in the Church question. Just as his concern for a concordant and reformed

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 132.

[2] Comparing his later and earlier views he wrote, "And I knew not how hardly Mens Minds are changed from their former Apprehensions be the Evidence ever so plain. And I have perceived, that nothing so much hindereth the Reception of Truth, as urging it on Men with too harsh Importunity, and falling too heavily on their Errors." Ibid., p. 125.

[3] Ibid., p. 87.

[4] Ibid.

Church had been the principal factor in his first relationship to politics, so it was this same concern which largely shaped his political attitude and policies during the Restoration period. The possibility of achieving reformation and unity was very small, but Baxter's zeal for it was undiminished, and he unrelentingly urged it upon the English people.

In this process he published several books which touch upon politics. Among these are *The Nonconformists Plea for Peace* (1679) and *The Second Part of the Nonconformists Plea for Peace* (1680), defenses of Baxter's Nonconformity explaining his position on the causes of the division in the English Church, the conditions for its unity and such political questions as civil and ecclesiastical authority and obedience; *A Moral Prognostication* (1680), a passionate and prophetic plea for national repentence, unity and reformation; and *Of National Churches* (1691), a statement of his later theory of Church government showing how far he was willing to go in accepting the established order.

The strategy which Baxter advocated in these writings is essentially that which he had advocated in the Interregnum, that is, a broadly based established national Church of "unity without uniformity" which would serve as the foundation of a holy commonwealth. There is, however, a discernible compromise in the direction of the established order, that is, toward a more tightly structured national Church than Baxter had earlier favored.

As unhappy as Baxter was with many aspects of the Restoration Establishment, there were powerful forces which were moving him to accept it. His goal was a united English Church. To achieve this in the Interregnum period it was immediately necessary to reconcile the "moderate" Episcopalians, the Independents, and the Presbyterians. If there were to be any hope at all of unity now, he must shift the direction of compromise away from Independency to the established order with its Prelatist and Erastian principles. Moreover, he was willing to grant the civil magistrate a more central role in the Church because he was convinced that "a happy and concordant Reformation" seemed unlikely in England unless the "Supreme Power" overruled the divisive clergy, whom he held chiefly responsible for the divided state of the English Church.[1] As the Church in the past had been benefited more by Princes such as Constantine and Theodosius than by Bishops and clergy, he thought, so might clergy-divided England.[2] Finally, he was more prepared to accept a tightly structured national Church like the established order because he now believed such a structuring was not, as he had earlier thought, "but a saddling the Horse for Papal Usurpation to ride upon," but quite the contrary, was "the principal way to keep out Popery."[3]

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1. Of National Churches (1691), Epistle to the Reader.

2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. Ibid.

The importance of Baxter's fear of Popery for understanding his earlier politics has already been suggested.[1] That fear increased rather than diminished after the Restoration. The forces working for "revolt" to the "foreign jurisdiction" of Rome, he believed, continued to be many, including the wealth and power of the Papacy and France, Anglo-Catholics who would unite with Rome on the basis of a modern conciliarism, e.g. the proposals of Hugo Grotius,[2] crypto-Catholics such as Charles II, avowed Papists such as James II, and, indirectly, Sectarianism and scepticism.[3] His belief in the urgency of this threat made him willing to compromise as far as his conscience would allow if Protestants could but be united in a national Church.

Baxter's fear of Popery also was the principal reason for his continued opposition to a granting of unlimited toleration, although he himself would have benefited from such a policy. Both Charles II and James II were willing to give the Nonconformists toleration if they would consent to universal toleration, but rather than allow Popery to be encouraged, Baxter preferred to suffer himself.[1]

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[1] See above, pp. 46ff.

[2] Baxter's attack, The Grotian Religion Discovered (1658), on Grotius's proposed reconciliation with the Papists brought down on his head the wrath of the Anglo-Catholics, e.g. Bishop Womack, Peter Heylin, etc. See Orme, The Life and Times of Richard Baxter, Works, I, 643-48.

[3] See Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction Which Would Be to England Its Perjury, Church-ruine and Slavery (1691); Orme, op. cit., pp. 641-59; and Powicke, II, 129-32.

Universal toleration would promote Popery in two ways. First it would allow the open advance of Papist teachings. More important, anarchy of freedom of religion would drive many to Popery as the only way to order. As he put the threat from this direction:

> By the odium and scorn of our disagreements, inconsistency and multiplied sects they [the Papists] will persuade people that we must either come for Unity to them or else all run mad and crumble into dust and individuals. Thousands have been drawn into Popery, and confirmed in it already, by this Argument, and I am persuaded that all Arguments in Bellarmine, and all other Books that ever were written have not done so much to make Papists in England, as the multitude of Sects among us.[2]

The consequence would be the ruin of Protestantism."Their doctrine is that we should be burnt for heretics . . . and therefore their toleration . . . is all one to make strappadoes and fire for ourselves."[3]

Having reviewed Baxter's writings which are largely polemical, "it is easy to quote abundant reasons for picturing him as a meddlesome debater, and a quarrelsome censor, and a theological spider weaving around him an expanding web of futile notions and

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1. Reliquiae, II, 433; III, 23ff.

2. A Defence of the Principles of Love, Pt. I, p. 52. Cited in Powicke, I, 257.

3. Cited in RB and Puritan Politics, p. 37.

distinctions."[1] But to do so would be an injustice. It would leave unexplained Baxter's hold and influence on so many of his contemporaries and even later generations. As William Haller suggests, the Puritans could not help producing polemical and hair-splitting treatises, but Puritanism did not grow or express its essential vitality in them.[2]

The explanation for Puritanism's vitality and Baxter's influence is rather to be sought in the genre of writings called "practical divinity." Baxter credited his own conversion and Christian growth to literature of this type.[3] In his maturity he became its greatest practitioner. Through this type of writing he influenced men, even as he himself had been influenced, at the fundamental level of the very style of life, at the level of "the imaginative ideals, of the habits of thought and expression, of the moral outlook and modes of behavior."[4] Moreover, these writings most fully communicate his understanding of politics in relation to man's total life. His writings on practical divinity, not his controversial writings on the immediate issues of the day, display his understanding of politics in the clearest perspective.

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[1] Powicke, I, 280.

[2] Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, p. 24.

[3] See above, p. 11.

[4] Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, p. 18. See also Walzer, op. cit., for a discussion of the impact of the Puritan ideal of saintliness on political behavior. As Walzer suggests, "The saint's personality was his own most radical innovation." Ibid., p.3.

The purpose of practical divinity was to guide and direct men so that theory and doctrine might be brought into experience and practice and thereby bring men to holiness and God.[1] The commitment to this task was interpreted by Baxter and his fellow divines to require nothing less than total guidance as to what men must aspire, believe, and do. Given such an ambitious aim, no part of human experience could escape their consideration, certainly not such an important part as politics.

Building upon earlier efforts, Baxter brought practical divinity to its final refinement.[2] Varying the form he employed to fit the subject and the audience of the particular work at hand, he produced sermons, treatises, tracts, one page sheets of directions, dialogues, character or biographical writings, catechisms, family books, a complete Christian directory, etc.[3]

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[1] Since this purpose exactly coincides with the essential nature of Puritanism, it is not surprising that it was Baxter's favorite and most characteristic kind of writing.

[2] By Baxter's time the form and method of this genre of literature had been established through the works of such men as Richard Rogers, William Perkins, William Ames, John Preston, John Downame, etc. John Downame's _A Guide to Godlynesse_ (1622) and _Christian Warfare_ (1604) and Richard Roger's _Seven . . . Treatises Leading and Guiding to True Happiness_ (1603) are typical early examples. See Haller, _The Rise of Puritanism,_ Chs. I, II, and III.

[3] For a more detailed discussion of the forms of Baxter's writings see Phillips, _op_. _cit_., Ch. 2, "Form and Content in Baxter's Ethical Writings."

Because the needs of men are many, the subjects of these writings were equally wide and numerous: conversion, Christian doctrine, Christian experience, Christian devotions, Christian ethics, etc. Diverse in subject matter as this genre of literature was, all the forms and subjects were united in Baxter's mind by their unity of purpose: guiding and directing men to obedience and holiness.

It is neither possible nor necessary for our purposes to discuss or even cite all these writings. It is the writings on ethics which most directly bear on politics. Of Baxter's ethical writings, the sermon and the treatise are the simplest and most basic forms. Examples are The Life of Faith (1670), A Saint or a Brute (1662), and How to Do Good to Many: or the Public Good Is the Christian's Life (1682). These only briefly or indirectly touch on politics. Because of the restrictions imposed on him by Restoration conditions, none is as direct in its treatment of politics as True Christianity, or Christ's Absolute Dominion and Man's Necessary Self-resignation and Subjection (1655), two assize sermons preached before magistrates when Baxter had the freedom freely to speak his mind.[1] More comprehensive are the catechisms and family books, The Catechising of Families (1683) and The Poor Man's Family Book (1674), which direct Christians briefly in all their relationships and duties, including political duties. Many others could be cited, for example, Compassionate Counsel to All Young Men (1682), which is an example of a work giving directions for a particular condition.

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[1] See above, p. 44.

The ideas pervading all of these efforts were systematized and summarized in Baxter's magnum opus, A Christian Directory: or, a Sum of Practical Theology, and Cases of Conscience (1672).[1] It is this comprehensive aim which justifies Tawney in calling it "a Puritan Summa Theologica and Summa Moralis in one."[2] As to its more specific intention, Baxter wrote, "I do especially desire you to observe, that the resolving of practical cases of conscience, and the reducing of theoretical knowledge into serious Christian practice, and promoting a skilful facility in the faithful exercise of universal obedience, and holiness of heart and life, is the great work of this treatise."[3]

In his discussion of "Form and Content in Baxter's Ethical Writings" Phillips calls A Christian Directory a manual of casuistry. But in view of Baxter's intended purpose he is compelled to conclude, "This purpose truly transcends the abilities of the casuistic form, which is primarily concerned with the category of 'lawfulness' rather than with 'holiness'."[4] Phillips's problem is resolved when it is recognized that the form of A Christian Directory is the guide to godliness and holiness of practical divinity rather than the manual of casuistry. The major part of the work consists of directions for living the godly life. Casuistry, that is, the resolution of cases of conscience, is employed only in the border situations where conscience is doubtful about its duty.[1] Baxter's ultimate purpose, "the faithful exercise of universal obedience," exceeds the casuistric method. Only the guide to godliness of practical divinity could aim so high. Yet casuistry is necessary to the guide to godliness because godliness consists in obedience to God, and casuistry is therefore needed to resolve difficult cases. Otherwise obedience could not be universal.

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[1] The theoretical part of divinity Baxter treated in Methodus Theologiae Christianae (1681). The two works together he intended as a complete statement of divinity. Reliquiae, III, 190; CD, II, v.

[2] Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (New York: Mentor Books, 1947), p. 183.

[3] CD, II, vi.

[4] Op. cit., p. 78.

The contents of this universal obedience, Baxter divided into four parts corresponding to man's relation to himself, to his household, to the Church, and to society at large, and structured A Christian Directory accordingly into sections on Christian economics or family duties, Christian ecclesiastics or Church duties, and Christian politics or duties to rulers and neighbors.[1]

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[1] "A Case of Conscience is a practicall question, concerning which, the Conscience may make a doubt. . . . Of this sort are all those questions wherein (supposing the generall doctrine of Faith and Obedience) wee enquire what our duty is, upon any particular occasion," wrote the great teacher of Puritan casuistry, William Ames. Conscience, with the Power and Cases Thereof (1639), Part II, pp. 1-2. Baxter's method is to give general principles in the form of directions and then to resolve difficult questions, the cases of conscience, through the casuistic application of these general principles to the particular cases.

The treatment of politics is not as detailed as that of A Holy Commonwealth both because the very nature of A Christian Directory required that its treatment be general and brief and, even more importantly, the restrictions imposed by Restoration censorship necessitated important omissions, for example, full directions to magistrates. The great value of this work over against A Holy Commonwealth is that it more manifestly treats politics in the context in which Baxter always viewed it, as a part of man's total obedience to God. In short, Baxter's treatment of politics is seen to be his attempt to answer the question of how man's political relationships and behavior can be brought into conformity with the will of God. The remaining Chapters of this dissertation will be given to explicating Baxter's theory of how this is to be done.

Richard Baxter and the Glorious Revolution

The Glorious Revolution was England's answer to the issues which had so agitated Baxter's mind. The settlement achieved after the deposition of James II eliminated the Papist threat, established that the English monarchy was a limited monarchy, and secured toleration for all Christians except Roman Catholics and non-Trinitarians. As far as it went, this settlement received Baxter's approval. The settlement of the Church question was, however, only a second best. Baxter and his kind continued to be excluded from the national Church and very largely from public life. Being tolerated was an advance over the suppression of the Restoration period, but it fell short of Baxter's hope for reconciliation in a comprehensive national Church which would devote its energies to nourishing holy men and a holy society rather than internecine warfare.[1] By rejecting Baxter's counsel, the English Church chose instead to continue to exhaust itself in controversy and in its divided state proved hardly a match for the growing secularism of the Eighteenth Century.

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[1] A Christian Directory occupies four volumes of Works: "Christian Ethics," volumes II and III; "Christian Economics," volume IV; "Christian Ecclesiastics," volume V; and "Christian Politics," volume VI.

Part of the explanation for the failure to achieve reconciliation must be traced to Baxter himself. With his inability to leave anything unsaid, his lack of tact, his subtle, analytical and scholastic mind, and his outbursts of temper against his opponents, he often created as much controversy and division as he resolved. When all is said, his greatest fault was over-doing, and this all too often was done in what, in the perspective of time, were trivial matters.

His last writing, however, is the final evidence that he always returned to the vital and central issues. For in his last

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1. See _Of National Churches_, Epistle to the Reader.

appeal to the English nation, The Poor Husbandman's Advocate to Rich Racking Landlords,[1] he spoke in behalf of those whom he had sometimes called the "Rabble." Basing his appeal on "the publike welfare of the nation" and "the interest of Christian Religion in the soules of men" he exposed the injustices suffered by poor tenants and warned of the consequences for nation and religion if justice were not done to them. In short, Baxter, himself a landlord, put God's will and the general welfare above self and class interest narrowly conceived and with great social vision forsaw the greatest social issue of the coming century, social injustice brought about by the disruption of the old agrarian order by the forces of the dawning industrial revolution. So though he was often mistaken by modern ideas, in the main he grappled with the real issues at stake.

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[1] Published by Frederick J. Powicke as "The Reverend Richard Baxter's Last Treatise," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, X, (January 1926), 163-218.

CHAPTER III

LAW, CONSCIENCE, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Although Baxter's political writings were occasional writings directed toward pressing immediate concerns, his understanding of man and society required that he treat political questions in a comprehensive, theoretical perspective. In particular, he felt it necessary to relate politics to the sovereignty of God. "All government of men," he maintained, "is but subservient to the government of God, to promote obedience to his laws."[1] Since human government is not to be separated from divine government, it follows that government and politics is inextricably related to theology and ethics.[2]

Baxter was all the more careful to show the fundamental importance of theology to practical politics and political theory alike because politics was being separated from theology by influential contemporary political theoreticians such as Hobbes and Harrington.[1] From Baxter's perspective the error of the former in his "absolute Impious Monarchy" was making the will of the human sovereign rather than the will of God the criteria of right and wrong. As he explained his objection:

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[1] CD, IV, 93.

[2] "And he that understandeth not the 'divine dominium et imperium,' as found in creation, (and refounded in redemption,) and man's subjection to his absolute Lord, and the universal laws which he hath given in nature and Scripture to the world, can never have any true understanding of the polity or laws of any kingdom in particular. . . ." Ibid., VI, 104. On the other hand, Baxter says he learned much about theology from writers on human government. "And they convinced me how unfit we are to write

> I speak of the evil of denying Christ's doctrine to be a law, in that most of the horrid consequences in Hobbes's book arise from that principle, _viz_., _ergo_ Christ doth but teach the Prince to command; . . . _ergo_ Scripture is no further a law (saith Hobbes) than sovereigns so make it; nor ministers have any power of governing, or commanding; nor Christ any Kingdom on earth.[2]

As for Harrington's error, it consisted of denying God's sovereignty by making "God but the Proposer, and the people the Resolvers or Confirmers of all their laws."[3] "If his Doctrine be true," Baxter objected, "the Law of Nature is no Law, till men consent to it."[4] In Baxter's opinion such politics is suited only

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about Christ's Government, and Laws and Judgment, etc., while we understand not the true Nature of Government, Laws and Judgment in the general; and that he that is ignorant of Politicks and of the Law of Nature will be ignorant and erroneous in Divinity and sacred Scripture." _Reliquiae_, I, 108.

1. "And I must," he explained, "begin at the Bottom, and touch these _Praecognita_ which the Politician doth presuppose because I have to do them some, that will deny as much, as shame will suffer them to deny." _HC_, p. 1.

2. "Letter to Thomas Hill, March 8 (1652)." Cited in _RB and Puritan Politics_, p. 15, footnote 8.

3. _HC_, pp. 44-46.

4. _Ibid_., p. 46.

to atheists and heathen, and such theoreticians are "proud Pretenders to Politicks, that opposing the Politician to the Divine, acquaint us that their Politicks are not Divine, and consequently none, or worse than none."[1]

Hobbes and Harrington were abandoning a theological foundation of political theory for a theory which traced the origin of government to purely utilitarian motivations. In this theory men are first viewed as isolated, naturally free individuals. When men enter into a political relationship, they do so out of the experience of the inconveniences and violences of that naturally free but insecure state. The origin of government and political obligation is each man's binding himself in a social contract to establish and obey a designated sovereign. The right of the sovereign is therefore derived from the transfer to him of each man's natural right over himself.[2]

Baxter found this reasoning objectionable ultimately because he believed that its presupposition that man possessed sovereignty over himself conflicted with the most fundamental Christian affirmation, the sovereignty of God. The people, Baxter insisted, could never create a sovereign government by transferring their sovereignty to it because they never possessed such a sovereignty. As he phrased his argument:

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[1] HC, p. 1.

[2] See J. W. Gough, The Social Contract (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

> And so if there were no God (and yet man could be man) and if the world had no universal King, that had instituted officers under him by Law, and distinguished the world into Rulers and Subjects, then indeed the people might pretend to give the power so far as they have it to give and be the Original of it: But when God hath given it already by a settled law, to those that shall be lawfully nominated, the peoples claim comes in too late.[1]

The Biblical and Medieval Background

Baxter was not, of course, original in his conviction that human government should be viewed as subordinate to and a part of divine sovereignty and government.[2] Indeed, he was justified in believing that theoreticians like Hobbes who sought to construct a theory of government on a purely utilitarian and purely human foundation departed radically from the biblical and medieval traditions.

The ideas of the sovereignty of God, his rule by law, the ruler as the minister of God, and a holy people righteous in the purity of its religion and in the justice of its social relationships are ultimately rooted in the theocratic ideal of the Old Testament. By speaking of the relationship of God to man largely

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1. HC, pp. 194-95. Cf. CD, VI, 26-29; The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XX, 505.

2. For other contemporary critiques of Hobbes's thought see Bowle, op. cit. Of the positions there described, Baxter's thought is most similar to George Lawson's.

in political metaphors, the Old Testament made a radical separation of religion and politics inconceivable from its perspective. For its demand is nothing less than the recognition of the total sovereignty of God which extends to every aspect of life.

The problem of the relation of the state to divine government is more complicated, however, in the New Testament. For in comparison with the Old Testament, Jesus's teaching created a more indirect relationship between human government and God's rule.[1] The problem which the New Testament relationship created for Christians is manifested in the tension between the admonition in Romans 13 to be subject to the powers for conscience sake because their authority is from God and the personification of the Roman state as the beast in Revelation 13. The question of how this tension is to be resolved and the teaching of Jesus related to the social order has received quite different answers in the development of Western civilization.

In the medieval age this tension was largely overcome. For though Augustine continued the tension in his dualism between the _civitas Dei_ and the _civitas terrena_, he put

> beyond question for many centuries . . . the conception that, under the new dispensation, the state must be a Christian state, serving a community which is one by virtue of a common Christian faith, ministering to a life in which spiritual interests admittedly stand above all other interests and contributing to human salvation by preserving

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[1] See Oscar Cullman, _The State in the New Testament_ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956).

the purity of the faith.[1]

In the fully developed ideal of the *respublica Christiana* medieval Christians expressed their conviction that God is man's true ruler and sovereign. According to this theory the world is a cosmos whose constitutive principle is the "divinely-willed Harmony of the Universe."[2] "It was a system of thought which culminated in the ideas of a Community which God Himself had constituted and which comprised All Mankind."[3]

The concept of the world as a divinely ordered cosmos was a synthesis of Christian and Greek elements, for medieval political thought was strongly influenced by Greek thought as well as by the Bible. In particular, it had a rational and teleological view of the constitution of reality. God is the Divine *Logos* or reason whose sovereignty is exercised through a hierarchical arrangement of reality in which his reason is the means of universal harmony. In addition to being the divine orderer, God is absolute being and timeless perfection and the ultimate good of man. The ultimate purpose of government is to direct man to the attainment of that good and therefore the attainment of happiness.

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1. George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (3rd ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 191.

2. Otto Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, translated with an Introduction by Frederick W. Maitland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), p. xivii.

3. *Ibid*., p. 4.

Medieval political thought used three doctrines to make divine government effective in the life of man: law, conscience, and the doctrine of the two powers of the _imperium_ and the _sacerdotium_. The classic expression of the medieval doctrine of law is found in Thomas Aquinas's synthesis of the Stoic, Aristotelian, and Biblical traditions.[1] In the Stoic doctrine of natural law, law is viewed as an expression of the impersonal universal _Logos_ or reason which permeates and orders the universe and which is the principle of reason in man. Aristotle contributed a teleological framework which understands law as an expression of reason and reason as the principle which discerns man's end and the appropriateness of acts to that end.[2] Aquinas, building on the early Church Fathers, related the Stoic natural law to the God of the Bible by regarding natural law as emanating from the reason of the personal God of the Bible and expressing his will for mankind.[3] The content of natural law is thereby related to the content of the moral law of Scripture. The influence of Aristotle is seen in the teleological framework in which Aquinas understands law. The complete synthesis, then, is the subordination of the impersonal law of nature and reason to the Christian God through an analysis of law as an ordinance of reason within a teleological framework.[1]

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[1] William A. Dunning, _A History of Political Theories, Ancient and Medieval_ (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1905) pp. 193-94, 196-97.

[2] For a brief summary of the Greek and Roman doctrines of law see Ernest Barker, "Introduction," in Otto Gierke, _Natural Law and the Theory of Society, 1500-1800_ (2 vols.; Cambridge University Press, 1905), I, xxxiv ff.

[3] Dunning, _op. cit._, pp. 196-97.

By defining law in terms of reason and positing a common reason in man and God, Aquinas was able to move from the ultimate source of law in the reason of God to human law. Although Aquinas recognized the distinction between the divisions of law into eternal law, natural law, divine law, and human law, his emphasis is on their continuity.[2] As one scholar has aptly summarized Aquinas's use of reason to link human law to the reason of God: "His four kinds of law are four forms of reason, manifesting themselves at four levels of cosmic reality, but remaining reason throughout."[3]

A positivistic doctrine which locates the source of law in the arbitrary will of a human sovereign is a contradiction of the nature of law. If even God's law is derived from reason, then certainly human law must also be so derived. In summary, Aquinas was able by his fourfold classification of law to relate law to reason and to show the common origin of all law in God. When each level of law fulfills its assigned role, all combine to direct man to temporal and eternal happiness, which are the sum of the individual and common good.

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[1] For Aquinas's doctrine of law see Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I - II, Questions 90-108, in Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, edited by Anton C. Pegis (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1945), II, 742ff. Hereafter cited ST.

[2] Ibid., Q. 91, A. 1-4, II, 748-53.

[3] Sabine, op. cit., p. 252.

Law and the Sovereignty of God

Baxter's political theory was in effect an attempt to reassert in Seventeenth Century Protestant England the fundamental premise of the medieval ideal: the world as a divine monarchy. Moreover, he employed the same categories used in medieval thought: law, conscience, and the divine orders or powers of the _imperium_ and the _sacerdotium_, in his theory of the administration of God's government. But because Baxter's Seventeenth Century Protestant understanding of God and his relationship to man differed in some respects from the medieval theory, his understanding of law, conscience, and the powers differed correspondingly.

From his Protestant heritage Baxter had learned to experience God primarily as will rather than as perfection of being or reason. Moreover, that experience was relatively more direct and immediate than the hierarchically and sacramentally mediated experience of God in medieval Christianity. This contrast can be generalized in the difference in the emphases between the ideals of the _viseo_ _Dei_ and the _regnum_ _Dei_ and as a shift toward voluntarism, or emphasis on the primacy of will rather than reason.[1] Thus though there were strong teleological and rationalistic strains in Baxter's thought, his concept of man's relationship to God was primarily deontological rather than teleological. Obedience to the will of God, not ascent to the beatific vision, is the form and matter of being a Christian and man's truest response to God.

Baxter's theological voluntarism was reinforced by his study of contemporary political thought, for in contemporary Papist, Calvinist, and secular political thought alike the central political questions were phrased in terms of right. Authority was based upon right, and the central political question of the Seventeenth Century was therefore who had the supreme right to govern, that is, sovereignty.[2] Thus theology and political theory alike combined to make the question of sovereignty a key doctrine in Baxter's thought.

The consequences of this emphasis upon right rather than reason for Baxter's attempt to ground political government in divine government are immediately seen in Baxter's doctrine of law. " Law," Baxter said, "is a signification of the Rulers Will constituting the Subjects Due."[1] In other places he defined law as "the Governing Will of a Rector signified, constituting or confirming Right (or Dueness) from and to the Subject"[2] and as "a sign or signification of the reason and will of the rector as such, to his subjects as such, instituting or antecedently determining what shall be due from them, and to them."[3]

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[1] For this comparison in greater detail see H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (New York: Harper and Bros., 1959), pp. 17 ff.

[2] See Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, pp. 177ff.

That law obliges is the effect of authority upon the recipient of the command. Obligation, which rests upon the authority of a right to command, is the essence of morality and law alike to Baxter. Not the appropriateness of an act to an end, although the teleological framework is often present in Baxter's thought, but obedience to an obligation is the norm of action. "The very summ of Morality, and therefore of all Law," he wrote, "is in this one word, 'Debitum'."[4] Because of this conviction, Baxter could go so far as to say that "Whereas some say, that if there were no Law, sin would deserve punishment, it is an errour. For it is due only by law."[5]

Since all law is derived from a right to command, or sovereignty,[6] this means that only a supreme sovereignty can bring all

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1. HC, p. 320. 2. Catholick Theologie, p. 52.

3. CD, V, 306. 4. HC, p. 330.

5. Catholick Theologie, p. 54.

6. "Laws are nothing but acts of Government; effects and significations of the Governours will concerning what shall be the Subjects Duty." HC, p. 239. "And where there is no Sovereign,

the categories of law into unity. Unless they can be brought into unity by deriving them from a common source in a common sovereignty, the various categories of law would become as autonomous as the various sovereigns are autonomous. Because Aquinas began with law as an expression of reason, he used reason as the link between human law and God and thereby prevented the autonomy of human law. In the Seventeenth Century claims for the sovereignty of the Pope, King, Parliament, and the people were in contention. Baxter found the source of all law in the sovereignty of God as Aquinas had found it in the reason of God. Baxter laid the foundation of his political thought by affirming that all right to govern, and therefore all law, must be derived from and serve God's sovereignty.

Whenever Baxter systematically discusses politics, he makes clear that the universal and absolute sovereignty of God is his fundamental premise.[1] In the first two chapters of A Holy Commonwealth, he attempts to demonstrate God's right to sovereignty, or the suprema potestatis, on the basis of nature and Scripture.[2] Passing by the details, this demonstration rests on three premises.

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there is no Act of Sovereignty; that is, no Laws." Ibid., p. 113.

[1] CD, VI, 22ff.; The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 1ff.; "Letter to John Swinfen, February 17 (1659)," in RB and Puritan Politics, p. 61.

[2] Chapter I, "There is a God that is mans Creatour, proved," pp. 4-5; Chapter II, "God is the Sovereign Ruler of Mankind: proved and that is in Order to another life," pp. 6ff.

First, God is creator; he therefore has absolute dominion or ownership of man. Second, God alone has a moral right to govern man because he alone is qualified by his fulness of wisdom, goodness, and power to fulfill such a task. Third, God has the highest right to govern man because he is man's greatest benefactor. In particular, he established this right over man in the redemption of man in Christ.

On this basis Baxter summarized man's relation to God in a threefold relationship. God is related to man as "our Absolute Lord (or Owner), our Sovereign, Ruler (or King), and our most Bountifull Benefactor; and man stands Related unto God as his own, his subject (as to obligation) and his Beneficiary."[1] From this it can be concluded that God has not only the Jus Imperii but also the Jus Dominii so that the world is not only a monarchy, but an absolute monarchy. "The World then is a Kingdom whereof God is the King, and the form of the Government is Monarchia absoluta ex pleno Dominio jure Creationis; an absolute Monarchy from or with a a plenary Dominion or propriety [property] of persons and things, by Title of Creation."[2]

Far more complex and controversial than the mere assertion of God's sovereignty is the question of how God exercises this sovereignty over man.[3] One central concern dominated Baxter's thought in answering this question: the vindication of God's moral government. For unless this could be maintained, both God and man would be debased and all morality undermined. The arguments which Baxter uses presuppose an orderly universe, which requires a God both good and omnipotent. He shows man to be a rational and free agent and then argues that God therefore governs him as such. The pattern of interpretation is the Puritan covenant.

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[1] HC, p. 17. [2] Ibid., p. 18.

[3] The captions under which Baxter discusses this question

Three contemporary theories seemed to Baxter to deny God's moral government, the "mechanical" or Epicurean theory, absolutism, and Antinomianism. Against each Baxter argued that the only appropriate form of government suited to man as a rational, free, and therefore moral agent, is moral government by law. The latter two denials properly relate to conscience and will be treated in the section on conscience. It is the first denial, the mechanical theory of the universe, which challenges the first principles of God's moral government of the world. Against it Baxter opposed the covenant pattern as the pattern of God's ordering of the world.

A non-moral means in general meant to Baxter anything which works by necessity or determination. A moral means is government which works through man's rational and voluntary faculties, that is, his intellect and will. God could use man as a

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in HC are Chapter III, "Of the Constitution of this Kingdome of God," and Chapter IV, "Of the Administration of this Universall Kingdome."

stone, which is moved by direct physical causation, or he could govern man by pleasure and pain as man does beasts, or he could rule man by a secret influx. But then he would have given man the faculties of intellect and free will in vain. In any case, man and God would be debased and morality, the free and responsible choice of the good, overthrown.[1]

Moral government, on the contrary, is a government appropriate to the nature of man because it governs through man's intellect and will by instruction and the moral causation of obligation. In order to restrict "law" to this kind of means, Baxter included "sign or signification" in his definition of law.

In A Holy Commonwealth, Baxter calls non-moral and singles out for refutation the theory of a Roman Catholic, Thomas White, who had affirmed that God governs "as an Engineer, that is, by a Physical Premotion only, as men govern Clocks and Watches, or the Pilote governeth a ship."[2] Elsewhere he identifies the mechanical or Epicurean position with Hobbes, Gassendi, and Descartes.[3]

The details of Baxter's refutation of these reductionistic philosophies which work on a mechanical model of the universe can not be dealt with here.[4] The sum of his argument in relationship to the government of man is that "It proved . . . that a meer Physical motion and government is not suited to the nature of the rational Creature: but that he must be governed by the proposal of convenient Objects, that is by laws, or moral Government."[1]

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[1] HC., pp. 13-14.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 41ff.

[4] Something of the general nature of Baxter's reply is seen in this statement: "Respicere ad plurima, to take in all

Baxter is willing to grant that God rules the physical world by determining necessity, but he will not grant this in regard to man because man is a free, rational creature. Therefore, God's government of man does not "infallibly determine, and objects necessitate the will."

> 1. Because we know there is true contingency in the world. . . . 2. We know that there is a Will in man that is a self-determining Principle, and naturally free, and that this is part of the Natural Excellency of man, that's called Gods Image, and maketh him capable of moral proper

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that must be taken in, is the character of true wisdom. But I find that the Epicureans do respicere ad paura; they look so much at things corporeal, that they quite overlook the noblest natures; and they reduce all to matter and motion, because nothing but matter and motion is thoroughly studied by them. And, like idle boys, who tear out all the hard leaves of their books, and say they have learned all when they learned the rest; so do they cut off and deny the noblest parts of nature, and then sweep together the dust of agitated atoms, and tell us that they have resolved all the phenomena in nature." The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 422. From his study of Baxter's critique of mechanistic philosophy, Phillips concludes, "It is obvious that Baxter was not familiar enough with scientific thought to offer adequate alternatives to the mechanistic philosophers he opposed. . . He did have the ability, however, to analyze for ethics the essential consequences of the leading philosophical views of his age and to criticize them quite effectively." Op. cit., p. 21.

[1] HC, p. 21. Baxter dismissed arguments against man's rationality with this rejoinder: "While I reason to prove that man is rational, and you reason against it, we both prove it." Ibid., p. 3.

Government, which Brutes are not.[1]

Those who would maintain the contrary would undermine all morality by making God the author of sin and man not responsible because he is not free. "Man must be ruled by his Rectors Will, not meerly as operating physically by a secret Influx, but as known; And we cannot know Gods Will immediately. . . . Only by Signs can we know Gods Will concerning our Duty; and those Signs are Laws."[2] God's government of man, then, is by law made known to him in a succession of dispensations.

Baxter discusses with scholastic precision what is properly called God's law. It need not be written or spoken but may be any "apt signification" of God's will. "Therefore, whatsoever is a signification of God's will to man, appointing us our duty, and telling us what benefit shall be ours upon the performance, and what loss or hurt shall befall us, if we sin, is a law of God."[3]

God's government of the physical world clearly does not come within the scope of this definition. Indeed, "government" is used only analogically to speak of God's relationship to the purely physical. Properly speaking the physical world belongs to

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[1] HC, p. 22.

[2] Ibid., p. 22. Although he does not explicitly refer to extreme Calvinistic theories of predestination, such would also be non-moral if they held to another government of man than through his reason and consent.

[3] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XX, p. 5.

God's providence, not to the moral government of the Kingdom of God, the subjects of which are rational creatures only.[1] Nor is the concept of eternal law a proper designation. Baxter agrees that the eternal wisdom and justice of God is the ground of the law of God. "But it is truly no law, because it is the will of God in himself, and not as rector."[2] Since a command presupposes subjects, God's law came into existence only at creation.

How, then, according to Baxter, has God signified his will to man, that is, given his law? God has used natural and supernatural methods of signifying his will to man, and his law therefore consists of two kinds, the law of nature and the law of Scripture.[3] But the giving of his law has occurred not in two but in several dispensations.[4]

The background of Baxter's thought here is found in the

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[1] Richard Hooker had used "natural law" to designate God's ordering of "natural agents" (physical nature) and "law of reason" for "that which bindeth creatures reasonable in this world and with which by reason they may most plainly perceive themselves bound." Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, in The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker, edited by John Keble, R. W. Church, and F. Pagent, (3 vols.; 7th ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1888), I, 205. Baxter did not consider this ordering of nature properly to be government by law. His usage therefore in this respect is closer to Aquinas than is Hooker's. HC, pp. 42-43; The Reason of the Christian Religion, Works, XX, 45-96.

[2] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 6. Cf. HC, pp. 317ff.

[3] Catholick Theologie, pp. 52-53.

[4] The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved, Works, XIII, 484.

Christian adaptation of the Stoic natural law concept and in the Reformed doctrine of God's covenants with man. Ernst Troeltsch suggests that the Christian Fathers were able to accept the existing order of the state by positing a twofold natural law, a primitive or absolute natural law and a relative natural law which corresponds to man's fallen state.[1] The Christian conscience was thus able to reconcile itself to private property, slavery, the patriarchal dominion of the male, the coercive state, etc., all of which conflict with the ideals of the absolute natural law. These two dispensations of natural law combined with the dispensations of the Mosaic law and the law of grace in Scripture, when set within the Reformed framework of the concept of covenant, give the general outline of Baxter's theory of the dispensations of God's law.

According to Baxter's covenantal philosophy of history, the history of man's relationship to God is the history of God's successive covenants with man by which he indicated to man on what conditions he would govern him.[2] The first of these covenants was what Baxter called the "covenant of works, or innocency,"[3] which corresponds to Troeltch's primitive, absolute natural law. After

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[1] *Op. cit.*, I, 152ff.

[2] *The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved*, *Works*, XIII, 484.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 499. *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*, *Works*, XXI, 191, 195.

Adam's fall, another covenant was needed, "that sinners be not left to the mere law of perfect nature, which was to preserve that innocency which they have already lost."[1] God's final dispensation of law was to be the law of grace revealed by Christ.

Between the primitive covenant of innocency and the covenant of grace, however, God ruled mankind by a government appropriate to his fallen state.[2] That is, in order to restrain men's sin God "forsook them, as to his special Government in way of mercy" to human, coercive government. Baxter calls this a fall from "merciful theocracy" to kings. "Yet did he not wholly forsake them, but only in that measure as they had forsaken and cast off him."[3] This dispensation corresponds to Troeltsch's relative natural law. Baxter regards the Mosaic covenant in the Old Testament, which was given in this middle time between the covenant of innocency and the covenant of grace, as a covenant with the Jews only. It contained elements of the natural law and also divine positive laws. Only the former are now binding, and they are binding because part of the natural law, not because they are in the Old Testament.

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[1] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 195.

[2] HC, pp.351-52. Baxter describes this as "penal" government as distinct from the "parental" government which was sufficient in the state of innocence. Ibid., p. 200. This will be discussed in detail as part of the discussion of the origin and nature of political government.

[3] Ibid., p. 352.

A sharp dualism is generally attributed to Luther's thought both between law and Gospel and between the two realms of the spiritual and the secular.[1] Left-wing Puritan thought also sharply separated nature and grace.[2] In the thought of the conservative Puritan Richard Baxter, however, the concept of covenant is an overarching framework which maintains the essential unity of all God's relationships to man, whether under the categories of law and Gospel, nature and grace, or Church and state. Such an emphasis upon continuity is generally associated with the Catholic tradition. Yet Baxter emphasizes this continuity as well. By the very use of the concept of covenant, law itself is regarded as an act of grace and therefore cannot be regarded as its antithesis. For as regarding natural and Mosaic law as rooted in covenant inextricably relates them to grace, so regarding the covenant of grace as the final dispensation of God's law inextricably relates the Gospel to law.

So far is Baxter from opposing Gospel to law that he regards Christ's teaching as the perfection of God's law.[3] And his statement of the content of Christ's law shows how closely related he keeps the content of the various dispensations of God's law.

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[1] Troeltsch, op. cit., II, 467ff, 501ff.

[2] Woodhouse, op, cit., pp. 57ff.

[3] The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 136ff.

In answering the question, "What laws hath Christ made, and what doth he rule by?", Baxter replies, "First, He taketh the law of nature now as his own, as far as it belongeth to sinful mankind. And 2. He expoundeth the darker passages of that law. And 3. He maketh new laws, proper to the church since his incarnation."[1] Here the congruity of the law of nature and the law of grace is seen in that Christ takes the law of nature and incorporates it into the law of grace.

In other places Baxter states the congruity of the law of nature with the law of grace in even stronger terms. Thus he writes:

> As it was the work of the Redeemer to be the repairer of nature, and the recoverer of man to God; so in all the several administrations, the great laws of nature containing man's duty to God, resulting from and manifested in our nature as related to God and the *natura rerum* or the works of God, was still made the chief part of the Redeemer's law: so that this law of nature, whose sum is the love of God, and of his image, is ever the primitive, unchangeable law; and the rest are secondary, subservient laws, either positive or remedying, or both; and no tittle of this shall ever cease, if nature cease not.[2]

In another place he states, "Nature entire, and nature depraved, must have the same pattern and rule of perfection ultimately to be conformed to; because lapsed man must seek to return to his integrity."[3] The law of grace is here so closely related to the

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[1] *The Catechising of Families*, *Works*, XIX, 136.

[2] *The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved*, *Works*, XIII, 484-85.

[3] *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*, *Works*, XXI, 191.

the absolute natural law that he can call it "the law of nature lapsed and restorable."[1]

The continuity of nature and grace is also seen in Baxter's belief that the life in accordance with reason and the Christian life are synonymous. Christian ethics is natural ethics because it is in accordance with man's nature as a rational creature.[2] It is not surprising, then, to find that Baxter not only held that God's law in Scripture never conflicts with his law in nature,[3] but that he gave identical summaries of their content, the duty to love God and his image, that is, man.[4]

Only the major aspects of Baxter's detailed analysis of God's law in nature and Scripture can be touched upon here.[5]

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[1] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 191.

[2] For this emphasis see A Saint or a Brute, Works, X.

[3] CD, V, 554-55.

[4] HC, pp. 50-51; The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 10ff. The difference between Baxter's deontological interpretation over against Aquinas's teleological framework is highlighted here. Aquinas defines the first precept of the law of nature as "good is to be done and promoted and evil is to be avoided," in accordance with the principle, "good is that which all things seek after." ST, I-II, Q. 94, A. 3, II,774. In contrast to this teleological framework, compare Baxter's deontological summary of the natural law in the categories of duties to God, to self, and to the neighbor. Moreover, the duty relates to an act of the will, the violition to love. Negatively put, the law of nature forbids sins: "1. Those that are against piety to God. 2. Those that are against our own welfare. 3. Those that are against our neighbours's good: and that is, 1. against justice. 2. Against charity." CD, VI, 323.

[5] See particularly Reasons of the Christian Religion,

Baxter's explanation for his detailed analysis is that even though there is an essential unity between the various dispensations of the law of God, "the alterations were many and great" in order to fit the "proper time and subject, according to the manifold wisdom of God."[1] So he must carefully distinguish the various forms of God's law in order that his readers not think that they are bound "to all that ever God bound any others to."[2]

His discussion begins with the signification of God's will found in nature and which is therefore called the law of nature. He expresses amazement that "so many sagacious, accurate schoolmen, philosophers, lawyers, and divines, should, for so long time, go on in such false definitions of it."[3] Some take it for an inclination or aptitude for certain common principles. Others take it for an actual knowledge of those principles, which may be either innate or known through nature. Baxter, like Locke, rejects the idea of innate knowledge. Neither should the aptitude for nor the actual knowledge of God's law be called law. For this confuses the knowledge with the law itself, and Baxter wants to insist that the law of God is objectively manifest whether man has

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Works, XXI, 5 ff.; The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved, Works, XIII, 484ff.; and CD, V, 27 ff. For a detailed study of the Puritans' concepts of law, see Ernest Kevan, The Grace of Law (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, Ltd., 1964).

[1] The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved, Works, XIII, 484.

[2] CD, V, 34.

[3] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 7-8.

a proper knowledge of it or not.

As his definition he gives, "All the objective significations, in _natura rerum_, within us, or without us, of the will of God, concerning our duty, reward, or punishment, are the true laws of nature in the primary proper sense."[1] He explains what he means by God's giving law in nature in these terms:

> When I say God hath given man this Law of Nature, I mean, both that he hath made an Impress of his mind upon the Creation, and set us this Glass to see himself, and much of our Duty in, and also that he hath given to the very nature of man Capacity of perceiving what is thus revealed, and a Disposition especially to the Reception of the more obvious Principles: so that by ordinary helps, they will be quickly known; and the rest may be known, if we be not wanting to our selves.[2]

Among the examples which Baxter gives of the duties which are to be known from nature are that we are obliged to take God for our creator and ruler, that we are obliged as social creatures to live in societies, and that we are to do good to other men.[3]

Baxter does not doubt that the law of nature is clear and certain. But the depravity of man's faculties makes nature "a very hard book" in which to discern our duty to God. Therefore there is a need for a clearer and more certain knowledge of God's will than it provides.[1] Moreover, there is need of a certain knowledge that cannot be known by reason but only by revelation. This knowledge was made known by God through divinely commissioned and inspired men, Christ preeminently, but also then the apostles, prophets, and Moses. This divine legislation, along with the records of sacred history, constitutes the Holy Scriptures.

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[1] _The Reasons of the Christian Religion_, _Works_, XXI, 6.

[2] _HC_, pp. 49-50.

[3] _The Reasons of the Christian Religion_, _Works_, XXI, 8-9.

The laws found in Scripture are either republications of the law of nature or divine positive laws.[2] The latter can be either universal laws which bind all men in all times and places, or they can be particular laws given to particular persons only. Since the Mosaic covenant was made with the people of Israel only and in any case has been superceded by the covenant of grace, the laws found in the Old Testament are now binding only in so far as they are republications of the law of nature or were made a part of the covenant of grace.[3] The distinctions between these kinds of laws must be carefully observed, else men will believe that they are bound by all the Jewish laws and every personal mandate to particular men found in the Bible.[4] The Ten Commandments are all republications of laws of nature except the commandment concerning the Sabbath, which is a divine positive law, and contain the main principles but not all of the law of nature.[1]

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[1] See The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Part II, "Of Christianity and Supernatural Revelation," Chapter 1, "Of the Need of a Clearer Light, or fuller Revelation of the Will of God, than all that hath been opened before," Works, XX, 131ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 149; CD, V, 33-35, 544ff.; The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved, Works, XIII, 484ff. The Sabbath of the Old Testament and the Lord's Day of the New Testament are examples of divine positive laws.

[3] CD, IV, 32-33, VI, 322.

[4] CD, V, 33.

The most curious of Baxter's classifications of law is what he calls a "temporary law of nature."[2] The problem which occasioned this concept was that God sometimes commanded acts which were in contradiction with what Baxter believed was the law of nature. How could this be explained? His answer was that an alteration in nature or circumstances required an alteration in the absolute law of nature according to God's wisdom. These alterations he called temporary laws of nature. The alteration of human government from purely parental to coercive government was required by man's fall, which altered man's very nature. Here, Baxter's concept of a temporary law of nature parallels Troeltsch's relative law of nature. Another example of his use of the concept is God's commandment to Adam's children to be fruitful and multiply, which required them to marry one another, an act contrary to the law of nature against incest. Here it is not man's nature but the circumstances which require an alteration of an otherwise universal law of nature binding on all men at all times. No doubt the concept of a temporary law of nature is unsatisfactory and artificial, but it was the best solution Baxter could conceive to explain seeming contradictions between God's law in nature and explicit commands in Scripture.

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[1] The Divine Appointment of the Lord's Day Proved, Works, XIII, 488, 496ff., 504ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 485; The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 8-9; CD, V, 34; HC, pp. 328-29.

Puritans are often regarded as Scriptural "positivists." In his doctrine of the authority of Scripture Baxter tried to avoid the extremes of claiming either too little or too much for Scripture. This concern is indicated, among other places, in two discussions entitled "How far are the Holy Scriptures a law and perfect rule"[1] and "Who be they that give too little to the Scriptures, and who too much; and what is the danger of each extreme."[2] On the one hand are those who deny that Scripture is given by God as a law and rule of faith and life. This was Hobbes's error. On the other hand are those who make it man's exclusive guide, to the exclusion of the law of nature, reason, and human learning. Here Baxter probably had in mind extreme Puritans who did hold to a literalistic Biblical positivism.

Baxter's general dictum is that "so far then as Scripture is a law and rule, it is a perfect rule: but how far it is a law or rule, its own contents and expressions must determine."[3] It is a universal and perfect rule in general of faith and morals. But he explicitly denies that it "meddles" in science, technical pursuits, etc.[1] As for politics, "It is not a full rule in particular for all those political principles which are the ground of human laws; as whether each republic be monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical, . . . etc."[2] But though Scripture does not determine directly such questions as these, all human government must be subordinate to and serve God's will as far as it is signified in Scripture "because God's laws are the measure and bound of human laws."[3] Thus the general principles which are to guide political behavior are given, but the questions such as the best polity are left open for changing situations and the choice of men.

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[1] CD, V, 502ff. [2] Ibid., pp. 561ff. [3] Ibid., p.28.

Like Aquinas, Baxter comes to the discussion of human law only after discussing the law of God in nature and Scripture. This methodological arrangement follows from the principle that human law presupposes the law of God because all human laws are but by-laws to God's law for the purpose of promoting obedience to them.[4]

The category of human law is broader than civil law in Baxter's thought, for he holds that the commands of parents to their children and pastors to the Christians under their discipline are correctly called human laws as well as the commands of political governors to subjects.[1] He holds this because a law is a command from a governor to a subject, and there are several orders of human government.[2] The authority and nature of human government and of the laws which are its means will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. It must suffice here to give Baxter's brief summary of the powers of human governors:

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[1] CD, V, 31, 504ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 504.

[3] Ibid., VI, 105. God's law includes both the law of nature and Scripture in Baxter's usage.

[4] CD, IV, 93; HC, p. 274.

> They are of various ranks and offices; and everyone's power is special, in that which belongeth to his own place and office. But in general they have power first to command inferiors to obey God's laws: And, 2. to command them such undetermined things in subordination to God's laws, which God hath left to their office to determine of; as corporations make by-laws, by virtue of the King's laws.[3]

Baxter's obvious concern to keep human law subservient to divine law is so evident as to need no elaboration. But in recognizing this, the second category of human law, that which regulates "undetermined things," should not be overlooked. For Baxter assigns this area a very significant role in human government. Indeed, most of the concerns and issues with which modern politics is concerned belong in the category of things which God has not determined but left to men's determination. The things which God has determined will be found to be only the very fundamental matters, as that men are obliged to live under government, that government is for the common good, that it is to promote obedience to God's laws, etc.[1]

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[1] CD, V, 306-07; The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 196ff.; HC, pp. 325-26.

[2] The only order of government in which government is not exercised by the commands or laws of a governor to a subject is self government. There is no giving of laws to self, but even here the will may metaphorically be said to command and therefore to give laws.

[3] The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 197.

The great difference between God's law and human law is that the first is to be obeyed absolutely, but all human laws are subject to human judgment.[2] For God is man's absolute governor, but all human laws are but the product of a human knowledge and judgment about duty. In the subject, this judgment is a private judgment as to his own duty. In the ruler it is a public judgment. This discerning and judgment is called conscience, and it is the next fundamental doctrine of Baxter's political thought.[3]

Conscience and the Sovereignty of God

The frame of reference in which conscience was discussed in the Seventeenth Century was inherited from medieval scholastic thought as transmitted through Thomas Aquinas.[4] According to Aquinas, conscience belongs to the intellectual faculty of the practical reason.[1] To the scholastic question of whether it is a power, habit or act he replied that it is an act, that is, that it moves from potential to realization. As proof for this he writes, "For conscience, according to the very nature of the word, implies the relation of knowledge to something; for conscientia may be resolved into cum alio scientia (knowledge applied to an individual case)."[2] On analysis it appears that there are two elements in conscience, synderesis, which is the knowledge of the first principles of the natural law, and syneidesis, which is the application of these first principles to particular cases.

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[1] The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XXI, 8ff.; HC, pp. 110ff.

[2] The English Nonconformity, Preface.

[3] Ibid.; The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 198; CD, VI, 54.

[4] For Aquinas's doctrine of conscience see ST, I, Q. 79, I, 795ff.

The whole function of conscience, then, is to enable man to make moral decisions by apprehending principles and applying these principles to particular cases. The process can be diagrammed as a moral syllogism in which a general principle of natural law is the major premise, the particular case in question the minor premise, and the judgment of conscience the conclusion. Conscience is then a natural faculty for knowing and judging which serves as the means of relating man's conduct to objective moral law or principles.

Baxter is relatively indifferent to the scholastic question of whether conscience is a power, habit, or act. It is, he says, taken properly in all these senses.[3] As a definition he suggests:

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[1] ST,I,Q.79, A. 12, I, 765. [2] Ibid., A. 13, I, 767.

[3] CD, VI, 96-97.

> The word 'conscience' signifieth either, 1. In general according to the notation of the word, The Knowledge of our own matters; 'Conscire;' the knowledge of ourselves, our duties, our faults, our fears, our hopes, our diseases, etc. 2. Or more limitedly and narrowly, the Knowledge of ourselves and our own matters in relations to God's law and judgment; . . . as Amesius defineth it.[1]

In this definition Baxter treats conscience as intellectual in nature, and grounds it theologically in God. In his further discussion he identifies its function as relating God's law to particular states or acts. The model which he uses is, as in Aquinas, the moral syllogism. God's law in nature and Scripture provides the major premise. The minor premise is the particular case in question. The conclusion is a judgment about one's state (innocent, guilty, saved, etc.) or duty (an act either commanded or forbidden).[2]

The most critical and controversial question about conscience in the Seventeenth Century was the question of the rule or bond of conscience, or the problem of moral authority in modern terms.[3] This question was so critical for political theory

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1. CD, VI, 96.

2. For an example of Baxter's use of the moral syllogism, see The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XX, 493-94. See Phillips, op. cit., p. 185, who cites and discusses this example.

3. Baxter's definition of conscience in A Christian Directory, for example, is given as part of his answer to the question, "Whether the Laws of Men do bind the Conscience?" CD, VI, 96. For a full discussion of conscience in the Seventeenth Century, see

because the rule of conscience is the determinant of right and the norm of action. In the Seventeenth Century the will of God was universally recognized as the ultimate authority. Not even Hobbes dared deny that.[1] The question was how does one determine the will of God? What is the mediate voice of God's will? This was the question which was so hotly debated, that is, the question of the mediate rule of conscience. The officers and tradition of the Church, the Scriptures, the law of nature, reason, the "inner light," the positive law of the human sovereign, and the voice of conscience itself were all proposed as this mediate determinant of God's will for man.

Baxter's reply to this question was developed in the context of his attempt to refute two theories of conscience, Antinomianism and an absolutism which exalted human sovereigns to the point of the denial of the duty of the private judgment of the individual conscience. In Baxter's mind these two theories of conscience were two "contrary extremes" which shared a common consequence, each denied the full sovereignty of God and overturned morality and religion. Antinomianism exalted the individual conscience too much. The error of the contrary extreme was its complete denial.

Hobbes personified absolutism to Baxter. "That every

Waldo Beach, "The Meaning and Authority of Conscience in Protestant Thought of Seventeenth Century England," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1944).

1. *Behemoth*, p. 59.

private man is Judge of Good and Evill actions" is, according to Hobbes, a "seditious" doctrine.[1] His answer to the question of the mediate rule of conscience is short and to the point:

> It is true that the law of God receives no evidence from the laws of men. But because men can never by their own wisdom come to the knowledge of what God hath spoken and commanded to be observed, nor be obliged to obey the laws whose author they know not, they are to acquiesce in some authority or other.[2]

That authority, Hobbes insists, must be the will of the human sovereign expressed in the laws of the commonwealth. The will of the sovereign is therefore the mediate rule of conscience, the standard of good, and "the virtue of a subject is comprehended in obedience to the laws of the commonwealth."[3] Private conscience is but private opinion which must yield to public judgment, else anarchy will follow.

In a dialogue with a lawyer Baxter encounters this same position in a less extreme form. "The way to Concord," the lawyer insists, "must be by obeying the Church in all cases that are doubtful to the Subjects."[4] The common element is the insistence on the submission of the private conscience or judgment to the mediate authority of the human sovereign. As Baxter described the argument for this submission and his objection to it:

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[1] *Leviathan* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1914), p. 172.

[2] *Behemoth*, p. 59.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 57. The quotation continues, "To obey the laws, is justice and equity, which is the law of nature, and, consequently, is civil law in all nations of the world; and nothing is injustice or iniquity, otherwise, than is against the law." *Ibid*.

[4] Richard Baxter, *The English Nonconformity*, p. 276. The lawyer's position was similar to Hooker's, who held "that in

> . . . they that are against strict adhering to the Scriptures, or observance of God's own commands, are yet so strict for obedience to their proud imperious wills, that they persuade themselves and others, that without it there can be no order, no unity, no peace but rebellion and confusion: and so they cry up Obedience, Obedience, that their Idol will may be bowed to by all without controul.[1]

Baxter also longed for order and peace and continually insisted that human government is to be obeyed as a divine ordinance of God. He would not, however, absolutize the judgment of sovereigns by denying the duty of every man to exercise his own judgment about his own duty.

The heart of his argument is his continual insistence that man's supreme governor is God and that as a rational, moral creature man cannot surrender to any the ultimate responsibility of discerning and fulfilling his duty to God.[2] In the order of human government, the responsibility of self government precedes Church

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litigious and controverted causes of such quality, the will of God is to have them to do whatsoever the sentence of judicial and final decision shall determine, yea, though it seem in their private opinion to swerve utterly from what is right. . . . For if God be not the author of confusion but of peace, then can he not be the author of our refusal, but of our contentment, to stand unto some definitive sentence; without which almost impossible it is either we should avoid confusion, or ever hope to attain peace." Op. cit., I, 168.

[1] Catholick Theologie, Preface. [2] CD, VI,56,87; HC,p.325.

or political government, for men are directly responsible to God, their absolute ruler, and only under him to human governors. "So must they first and chiefly use their own reason, to judge discerningly what actions are commanded or forbidden by God, and must do accordingly whoever is against it."[1]

Certainly men must be willing to be informed of their duty by their superiors and must be very reluctant and cautious about going against their judgments. But to deny men the ultimate responsibility of using conscience to discern their own duty is "to rule them as beasts or madmen, and prove that there is no heaven or hell for any in the world but kings and pastors. . . ."[2] "Hath God laid our salvation on princes, and patrons choice, or on our own? If we miscarry by their choice will they be damned for us and not we?"[3]

> But if they must not have the foresaid discerning judgment to guide their actions, it will follow; 1. That they are not governed, nor must obey as men by Reason, and Free-will, but as Brutes. 2. That Kings have Absolute Power against God, and must be obeyed in all that they command, e.g. if it be to curse or blaspheme, or renounce God or Christ, to command the Subject to live in Murder, Adultery, perjury, etc. and so to abrogate the Law of Nature. 3. If followeth, that there is no God (that is, a Supreme Ruler) but the King.[4]

Since this was the price of denying private judgment and absolutizing the law of the human sovereign as the mediate rule of conscience, Baxter insisted that "private judgment, which is nothing but a rational discerning of truth and duty, in order to our own choice and practice, belongeth to every rational person."[1] Every human law must be subjected to the discerning judgment of conscience, and the theory of political government must take account of the prior self government by conscience under God which every man must exercise.

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[1] The English Nonconformity, Preface. [2] CD, VI, 56.

[3] The English Nonconformity, pp. 296-97. [4] Ibid., p. 7.

What then is the obligation of human law upon conscience if it is not its mediate rule? Baxter replied first of all that it is improper to say that the conscience is bound by human law. "All legal or moral obligation falleth directly upon the will only: and so upon the person as a voluntary agent; so that it is proper to say, 'The will is bound,' and 'The person is bound.'"[2] Conscience is but the discerning of one's duty, that is of determining that to which one is obliged. The question properly put is: What obligation or duty does human law impose upon man?

Since God is man's absolute governor, all obligation must be derived from God's sovereignty. In so far, then, and no farther, as human law is derived from God's authority does it oblige man.

> Man is not God; and therefore as man, of himself can lay no Divine obligation upon us. But man being God's officer, 1. His own law layeth on us an obligation derivatively

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[1] CD, VI, 54.

[2] Ibid., p. 97.

> Divine (for it is no law which hath no obligation, and it is no authoritative obligation which is not derived from God.) 2. And God's own law bindeth us to obey man's laws.[1]

In this sense, obedience to human law is obedience to God and disobedience is sin. But "it is no sin to break a law which is no law, as being against God, or not authorized by him, (as of a usurper, etc.)"[2] And this judgment every man must make by his conscience of every human law.[3]

As man's governor, God has made known his will in the law of nature and Scripture and has given man capacity to know this law. Whatever the ruler commands in conformity to these laws is to be obeyed as being obedience to God. But whatsoever is against those laws is not to be obeyed. For the mediate rule of conscience is the law of God in nature and Scripture, not human law.

Whereas the cry of those who absolutized the law of the human sovereign was order and obedience, the cry of the Antinomians was grace and liberty. The Antinomian interpretation of conscience was based upon an extreme doctrine of free grace, election, and predestination. As James Phillips states their position:

> The work of justification has already been accomplished for us, according to the Antinomians, and is now 'terminated in

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[1] _CD_, VI, 99.

[2] _Ibid_., p. 100.

[3] _The English Nonconformity_, Preface.

> our consciences' which now become the only law courts for our deeds. Since the decisions of these tribunals have already been wrought by God, our consciences have the sole function of comforting us with that assurance.[1]

In Antinomianism conscience itself is the mediate voice of God and therefore its own rule. In modern categories, Antinomianism is the denial "of subjection to any law other than the subjective caprice of the empirical individual."[2]

The error of the Antinomian doctrine of conscience according to Baxter is twofold. First, it denies the continuing obligation of the law of God on the Christian and consequently subverts morality. God's justification of man becomes arbitrary and man a purely passive recipient. To this Baxter objected, "And so a man is not obliged to be pious, just, honest, or sober; but if God will make him such, he will be such. And then it will follow, that there is no sin: And things that men do, are such as God hath moved them to."[3] It subverted God's sovereignty by exalting too much the individual conscience, that is, by making conscience its own rule. As Baxter described this error,

> There is a dangerous error grown too common in the world, that a man is bound to everything, which his conscience telleth him is the will of God; and that everyman must obey his conscience, as if it were the lawgiver of the world; whereas, indeed, it is not ourselves, but God that is our lawgiver, and conscience is not appointed or

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[1] Op. cit., pp. 56-57.

[2] Sterett, op. cit., I, 582.

[3] HC, p. 40.

> authorized, to make us any duty, which God hath not made us; but only to discern the law of God, and call us to observe it: and an erring conscience is not to be obeyed, but to be better informed, and brought to a righter performance of its office.[1]

Conscience, then, is not the rule of duty but the means of apprehending duty. When it correctly discerns duty to God, it is indeed then the messenger of God.[2] But when it errs, sin is unavoidable. To follow an erring conscience is to be led into evil. On the other hand, if one does not follow an erring conscience, one sins because in intention one disobeys God because one believed what conscience discerned to be one's duty. The point to be made against Antinomianism is that to follow an erring conscience is sin. God's law, not conscience, is the objective norm of duty.

As Baxter summarized his argument: ". . . the error of my conscience altereth not God's law, nor will it make it lawful unto me. I am bound first to know and then to do what God revealeth and commandeth: and this I shall be bound to, whatsoever I imagine to the contrary; and to lay by the error which is against it."[3] Conscience is no more than human law permitted to become autonomous, obliged to no higher rule than itself.

Phillips has described the relationship between law and conscience in Baxter's thought as a dialogue. "In his dialogue, law represents the various formsof God's will for mankind while conscience speaks for the total selfhood of an individual man as he examines his own actions in the light of God's will."[1] Through this dialogue man discerns his duty and governs himself by God's law. But this dialogue is not conducted in a vacuum. For man is a social creature who lives in society. Nor has God left man with only his individual discernment, for self government is but the first of the orders of human government. God has ordained other orders of government to aid man's obedience to God. The discussion of their origin and nature, political government in particular, is therefore the next step in understanding Baxter's political thought.

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[1] CD, II, 336-37. [2] Ibid., p. 541.

[2] Ibid., V, 143-44; Cf. II, 338.

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[1] Op. cit., p. 185.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF POLITICAL GOVERNMENT

Having established the fundamental premises of God's sovereignty, man's rational, moral nature, and God's government by law and conscience, Baxter had next to show the place of political government within the divine government of the world. This he did in a discussion of the origin and nature of political government.

The Origin of Political Government

From his reading of political writings, Baxter was familiar with the theories which earlier Christians had followed concerning the origin and nature of political government. The first of these is the biblical affirmation that the magistrate is ordained of God and is to be obeyed as his minister.[1] This basic affirmation was elaborated by early medieval thought into the Gelasian theory of the two swords with its assumption of the _respublica Christiana_ ruled mediately by God through the two powers of the _sacerdotium_ of the priest and the _imperium_ of the civil magistrate as part of God's universal mediate, hierarchical government of the world. In the Gelasian theory the powers are coordinate powers, each essential to the _corpus Christianum_ and each supreme within its proper jurisdiction.[1] "The _Sacerdotium_ and the _Imperium_, each of these, taken by itself was but one vital Function of the social Body, and the fulness of Life was only attained by their 'harmonious concord' and by their mutually supplementing co-operation in the task that is set before Mankind."[2]

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[1] The classic texts are Romans 13, I Peter 2: 13-18, and the Fourth Commandment, which was interpreted to enjoin obedience to magistrates as well as to parents.

Two theories which otherwise differed greatly found the origin of political government in man's nature. According to the theory held by Aristotle and Aquinas, man is naturally a social or political animal to whom living in society and therefore political government is a natural necessity. Another theory, on the contrary,

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1. This theory was later modified, particularly by Gregory VII, so that not only is the spiritual power superior to the temporal power as the soul is to the body, which the Gelasian theory affirmed, but the temporal power is mediated through the spiritual power because both powers were given to the Church in the bestowal of the keys on Peter. See "Deposition of Henry IV by Gregory VII, February 1076," in Henry Bettenson (ed.), _Documents of the Christian Church_ (New York: Oxford University Press,1947), p. 146. Cf. Boniface VIII, "The Bull Unam Sanctum, 1303," in _ibid_., p. 162.

2. Gierke, _Political Theories of the Middle Ages_, pp. 17-18.

found the origin of political government in man's fallen and anti-social nature. This theory, which received its fullest expression in Augustine's City of God, saw the state as both an expression of man's sin and as necessary for its restraint. "Who," asked Gregory VII, "does not know that kings and leaders are sprung from men who were ignorant of God, who by pride, robbery, perfidity, murders . . . have striven with blind cupidity and intolerable presumption to dominate over their equals, that is, over mankind."[1] But though their rule was itself an expression of sin, it was necessary to restrain sin. Thus the state is a "dike" against sin. Government came in by sin, not by the social nature of man, for without sin men would do voluntarily what the civil magistrate compels them to do.

Another theory was a Christian use of the concept of social covenant or contract, which traces government to the contract and consent of the governed. Hooker is an example of a Christian use of the social contract.[2] And in Puritan thought the influence of the idea of covenant was pervasive. It can, in fact, be said that "Promise or Covenant was the ordering principle of the Puritan's whole world."

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[1] "Gregory VII's Letter to the Bishop of Metz, 1081," in Bettenson, op. cit., p. 149.

[2] Hooker wrote:". . . impossible it is that any should have complete lawful power, but by consent of men, or immediate appointment of God." "So that in a word all public regiment of what kind soever seemeth evidently to have risen from deliberate advice, consultation, and composition between men, judging it convenient and behoveful; there being no impossibility in nature considered by itself, but that men might have lived without any public regiment," Op. cit., I, 242, 243.

> The Covenant was not, for the Puritans, one idea or concept among others. It was the fundamental motif running throughout the whole of their life to shape their total understanding and their feeling for existence. It pervaded and held together their views of religion, politics, and ethics; it shaped their whole approach to marriage, church, and society.[1]

Baxter's thought was influenced by each of these traditions. Consequently, his theory of the origin of political government can be seen as a synthesis of many previous strands of thought.

There was an additional theory of political government, the theory which traced its origin to the right of the father over his children. This was the theory employed by Robert Filmer in his Patriarcha (1680). Kings, Filmer argued, should be regarded as the heirs of Adam's paternal power. This theory, however, seems to have had no influence on Baxter's thought. There was first of all the practical difficulty of deriving the right to rule by this theory for any present government. "I hope," he wrote to those who had attacked his use of social contract, "you will not put all kings to prove such a right of primogeniture, as continued from

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[1] Gordon Harland, "American Protestantism: Its Genius and Its Problem," The Drew Gateway, XXXIV (Winter, 1964), 71-82. Cf. Miller, op. cit., pp. 407ff.

Noah, and not founded in contract? Nor expose their title wherever such right of continual primogeniture is disproved."[1] But this was not the only objection to this theory. For Baxter believed that political government differed in very important respects from paternal government. In particular, children in their infancy are not capable of exercising reason and judgment and therefore must to that degree be "ruled as brutes," that is, by pleasure and pain. But subjects are not to be so ruled.[2] Thus both the origin and nature of political government had to be sought elsewhere than in paternal government.

Of the question about the origin of government, perhaps the most difficult problem Baxter faced was the question of the role of consent. As was suggested at the beginning of Chapter III, he insisted that a theory which locates the origin of government in the surrender of an absolute right that each man naturally has over himself to a human sovereign is not only artificial but challenges the Christian premise of the sovereignty of God.[3] He also set out to refute a purely utilitarian social contract theory of the origin of the state.

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[1] A Sheet in Reference to the Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford, p. 152.

[2] The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 197-98. Baxter also rejected Filmer's theory that monarchy is the divinely ordained form of government.

[3] See above, pp. 83ff.

He began his refutation of the theory that government is purely utilitarian and a matter left to human volition by admitting that in extraordinary cases man may live without government. But for man in general to live in society under government is ordained of God. Therefore political government is an order of existence by divine ordination, not a matter left to human choice.[1] The proof for this assertion he finds in Scripture and nature. But though he does cite the usual Scriptural texts,[2] the major part of his demonstration of the divine ordination of government comes from the evidence he detects in nature.

The first part of this evidence comes from man's own nature. God determined that there is to be government by making man a social creature, insufficient to himself, who has a natural inclination and necessity to live in society. Thus it is not left to men to decide whether they will live in a political relationship or not, the necessity is built into man's very constitution. For proof for this statement, Baxter points to the infant's need of care and to the natural inequality that exists even among adults.[1] Moreover, man is not only a social creature because of his necessary need of other men, he is made such by inclination. Man is a lover of man with a natural desire to use his strength and wisdom for the good of others. There is thus a moral as well as a utilitarian motivation for social life. Man lives in society not by mere necessity but in order to fulfill his higher nature.[2] Further, it is not enough merely to live in a group, government is needed. "Experience tells us that God's work or our preservation cannot be well carried on without it; without it the world would be a confused crowd."[3] In summary, by nature man needs and is inclined to live in society under a government which provides for safety and preservation and promotes the good life.

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[1] "He therefore that should think he is born a Freeman, and will be Governed by none, (being not a Governour himself) doth sin against God, in violating his Order, as Souldiers whould do in an Army that would have no Officers, nor be commanded by any but the General." HC, p. 52. Cf. CD, VI, 23.

[2] See The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 196-97; and HC, pp. 121-25.

The second part of this evidence comes from a theological concept of nature in general and in effect is Baxter's appropriation of the hierarchical concept of God's government of the world. God could indeed rule the world directly so that mediate government would not be needed. But he has chosen to rule the world mediately, that is, to use some parts of the creation to rule other parts. This means that God had created a natural inequality in the cosmos, a hierarchy of administration, in which some parts mediate God's government over other parts. The existence of this principle argues that man himself should be so governed.

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[1] HC, pp. 52-53. [2] CD, VI, 23; HC,pp. 52 ff.

[3] HC, p. 54.

Examples of this mediate, ordered government are seen in every part of the cosmos. Since man is a microcosm, the relationship of his faculties illustrates the universal principle of mediate, ordered government: "The intellect in man is made to guide, and the will to Command, and all the inferiour faculties to obey: shewing us that in societies the Wise should guide, the Good should command, and the Strong and all the rest should execute and obey. An ungoverned man is a mad man or a bad man."[1] So also is an ungoverned society; an ungoverned society is inconsistent with God's universal mediate ordered government of the world. Even the angels, who have no sin, have different ranks and mediate government among themselves. So then should man also. "The great disparity that is among all Creatures in the frame of Nature intimateth the beauty of Orderly Political disparity."[2]

Since Baxter traces the origin of government to man's social nature, man's sin is not the origin of government. For there would have been government, as there is among the angels, even if man had continued in innocence. But Baxter does not totally reject the Augustinian view of the origin and nature of government. Man's sin does make government all the more necessary and necessitated a change in the nature of government.[3]

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[1] HC, p. 55. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., pp. 200, 351-52,365-66.

One of the striking passages in Baxter's political writings is his description of the effect of sin in breaking order:

> The attempt of breaking his rank, and forsaking his due subjection, was the Devils fall: and by the same way he assaulted man, inciting in him a desire to be as God. . . . The breach being thus made between man and his universal King, the joynts of holy order were loosed, and a breach was made also between man and himself, and man and the inferiour creatures, and enmity and confusion took possession in the world. The creatures Rebell against their Master turned Rebell: His own passions and appetite Rebell against his Reason: and the seeds of all the Confusion that have followed in the world, were sown within us. . . . so all those vices in which the Malignant enmity doth consist, are propagated and by custom receive an increase. The Root of them all is Selfishness, which much consisteth in Pride; still man would be as God. Every man would be as God. Every man would be Highest, and have the eyes of others set upon him, and be the Idol of the world. The sin that broak Order, is still at work to widen the breach.[1]

If government was ordained even in man's innocence, how much more is it needed to govern a rebel world.

> The vitiousness of men hath made Government now of double necessitie, to what it would be if men were innocent, when men are Wolves to one another, and the weaker can keep nothing that the stronger hath a mind to. . . , it is now no more question whether Government be naturally necessary, and subjection a duty, then whether Physitians be necessary in a raging plague, or food in a famine.[2]
>
> What would a nation be without government, but like a company of thieves and lawless murderers? or like the pikes in a pond, that first eat up the other fish, and then devour one another: the greater living upon the less. Bears and wolves could live more quietly together, then ungoverned men, (except those few that are truly subject to the

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[1] *HC*, p. 201.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 53.

> government of God.) Government maintaineth every man in his own propriety property ; and keepeth lust and madness from breaking out; and keepeth peace and order in the world.[1]

Because of this new fallen, vicious nature, the purely "assisting, paternal government" which existed before the fall is no longer adequate. God therefore altered it from a "gracious theocracy" of paternal, merciful government to penal, coercive government. "The more men sinned, the more he gave them up to humane human Government, and as they rebelled and departed from him, so he forsook them, as to his special Government in way of mercy." "Yet did he not wholly forsake them, but only in that measure as they had forsaken and cast off him."[2] Thus although Baxter did not find the origin of government in sin, he did find the origin of coercive government in it and accepted the concept of government as a dike against sin.

Having demonstrated to his satisfaction that political government is not a matter of mere human volition but is part of the constitution of the cosmos, Baxter nevertheless could not totally deny a place for man's consent. For Baxter, as for Puritans in general, covenant is the ordering principle of the rational

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1. CD, II, 212. That government is necessary, Baxter further argues, is shown by the existence of government even among cannibals and in armies. The Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XX, 497-98.

2. HC, p. 352.

world, and covenant necessarily implies a role for consent. The problem was how to employ covenant and consent in a way consistent with both man's reason and free choice and the sovereignty of God.[1]

A role for contract and free choice is necessary, but an overemphasis on man's consent could undermine the sovereignty of God. This was the error that Baxter detected in Harrington's political theory. In arguing that the people's consent is necessary before government and law can obligate, Harrington said that their consent was needed before even God's laws were binding.[2] Baxter quotes Harrington as writing of Israel's relationship to God:

> They make him King, Deut. 19. They reject or depose him as Civil Magistrate and elect Saul, I Sam. 8.7 (adding)

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[1] Perry Miller suggests the problem Baxter faced: "As the future was indeed to certify, contractual theory was not in every respect ideally adapted to advancing piety. . . . By inference it denied original sin, proclaimed the competence of human reason, and allowed the autonomous individual a self-interest prior to all other moral concerns. It was voluntarism, but in its bare political form it was voluntarism with vengeance, and though no Puritan voiced such forebodings, the more perceptive of them might have realized that they were playing with fire." _Op_. _cit_., pp. 415-16. It was just such consequences which Baxter sought to avoid by carefully formulating his theory of the role of consent.

[2] Hobbes's error was in essence the same, though he made the sovereign rather than the consent of the people the judge of which of God's laws would be binding. As Baxter described Hobbes's theory, ". . . Scripture is no further law (saith Hobbes) than sovereigns so make it; nor ministers have any power of governing, or commanding; nor Christ any Kingdom on earth." "Letter to Thomas Hill, March 8 (1652)." Cited in _RB and Puritan Politics_, p. 15, footnote 8.

> The Power therefore which the people have to depose even God himself as he was Civil Magistrate, leaveth little doubt, but that they had power to have rejected any of those Laws confirmed by them throughout the Scripture.[1]

Thus Harrington undermined God's sovereignty by denying the obligation of natural law upon rulers and subjects until they consent to it.[2] "All men as men," Baxter objected, "are the subjects of Gods Kingdom, as to Obligation and Duty, and God will not ask the consent of any man to be so obliged. For Gods Kingdom is not constituted primarily by Contract, but his Right. . . ."[3] Since God's sovereignty rests in his right as creator and his aptitude to govern, men are obliged by his laws whether they consent to them or not.

This is not to say that consent is irrelevant, however, for it determines the way men are subject to God. For not all men are subject in the same way. By refusing consent and obedience man can make himself a rebel. Or by giving consent and obedience, he can make himself a subject enjoying the full benefits of God's Kingdom. On this basis Baxter can reply to Harrington's theory that even the laws of God are subject to man's consent:

> They could violate a Law, and deny obedience to it; but they could not nullifie it, or prevent, or destroy its obligation. So they could be Rebels against God, but they could not so reject the duty of voluntary subjection, nor escape the punishment of Rebellion. One single person may thus reject God and his Laws at any time, (to his cost) as well

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[1] *HC*, p. 45. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 46. See above. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 42

> as the Major vote of the people. . . . Mans consent doth not make God King, nor his dissent depose him, as to his Power, or the chief part of his actual Government: He will be K. in spight of his proudest enemies: and he will make his Laws; and those Laws shall actually oblige; and men shall be guilty, that first consent not to be Subject, and then obey not; and they shall be judged as Rebels. . . .[1]

What then is the role of consent in relation to human government and laws? Baxter acknowledged that men can only be ruled by consent in the sense that they can choose to die rather than to obey.[2] The question, however, is one of right or obligation: Is the consent of the governed the source or origin of the authority or right of sovereigns? Is there a right to be governed only by one's consent?

Baxter conceded that "the Peoples Consent is ordinarily necessary to the constitution of the Government, and that their freedom is taken from them, when this is denied them," for free men should choose those who are to govern them under God.[3] But this right of free men to choose who will govern them is not to be confused with being the source or origin of political authority. For all right to govern must be derived from man's absolute governor, God. "There is no power, but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God."[4] The magistrate is the minister of God and derives his authority from God. Neither as individuals nor as a group can the people be the origin of a right to rule because they cannot give what they do not possess.[1] Thus men do not have a choice as to whether they will be ruled under God, but they do have, ordinarily, a choice of who their rulers will be. This choice of persons, however, is not the source of the office. The office is from God. "They may choose nor nominate the Person, but they give not the Power." "So whether Princes, Lords or Parliaments be Sovereigns, the People may choose or nominate the Persons, but the Charter of the universal King (in the Law of Nature or Scripture) is the immediate Instrument of the Authority, as being the act of that will of God which doth convey it."[2]

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[1] HC, p. 45.

[2] Ibid., p. 142.

[3] Ibid. An Addition to the Preface.

[4] CD, VI, 24, quoting Romans 13.

As Schlatter says, "Again and again Baxter attacked the theory of popular sovereignty as a subversive doctrine, and it was a bitter frustration to him that the great proponent of popular sovereignty, Richard Hooker, should be an honored name in England, while Baxter was stigmatized as the theorist of rebellion."[3] The issue between Hooker and Baxter was whether the people as a whole possessed a sovereignty which they conferred on the sovereign and whether their consent was necessary to give power to his law.[4]

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[1] CD, pp. 25ff.; HC, pp. 63ff. [2] HC, Preface.

[3] RB and Puritan Politics, p. 29. See CD, VI, 27ff. for Baxter's discussion of Hooker.

[4] Hooker, op. cit., I, 245ff.

The Anglican Royalist, Jeremy Taylor, stood with Baxter in holding that God, not the people, is the origin of the authority of the sovereign and that the consent of the people is not necessary to make his laws binding. Taylor differed from Baxter, however, in believing that political authority was an extension of parental authority and that "it is not lawful for subjects to rebel, or to take up arms against the supreme power of the nation, upon any pretence whatsoever."[1]

Baxter objected to the doctrine of popular sovereignty in addition because it creates confusion. Sovereignty is the right to govern, and popular sovereignty means that the whole people possess this right. Baxter objected that the whole people can not govern. There must be a clear distinction between the governors and the governed and what properly belongs to each. The governors possess sovereignty, the right to govern. The people possess the right, ordinarily, to choose their governors, But it is to confuse things to call the right of choosing sovereignty. Nor is the right of free men to choose their governors to be absolutized so that this right is given to all men absolutely and legitimacy denied to all governments not chosen by majority vote.

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[1] Ductor Dubitantium, in The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, edited by Reginald Heber, Charles P. Eden, and Alexander Taylor (10 vols.; London: Longman, Green, Roberts, and Green, 1864), X, 56ff., 185ff.

In reply to the argument that a majority vote is necessary to legitimize a government, Baxter first of all points to the historical fact that very few governments have been so constituted For conquest, not majority vote, has been the usual means of determining who is qualified to govern: "not by giving the Right to govern, but by making the Conquerour materiam dispositam, the capable subject of that Right, and object of the peoples choice." Even though ". . . his Conquest or Occupation be sinful, yet if he thereby become the only capable person to Govern, the People are to consent (supposing no special impediment to forbid it.)"[1] His second argument questions the idea that a majority vote alone represents the "people." In most cases there would be "much uncertainty, which way the Majority Vote inclineth." Moreover, Baxter can see no reason why the consent of the wisest, the best, and the strongest may not be accounted as the consent of the people as well as a majority vote.[2] "There is nothing in Nature to tell us," he says, "that 1001 should have the Power of Governing (and so the

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1. HC, pp. 163-64. Describing the reason why his party did not refuse obedience to the Cromwells, Baxter wrote: "They knew that the King was by birth their rightful sovereign. . . but they thought it not left to our liberty, whether we would have a government or not: but that government is of divine appointment; and the family, person, or species is but a subservient, less necessary determination: and if we cannot have him that we would have, it followeth not that we may be without. . . ." Reliquiae, I, 100.

2. HC, pp. 65, 185.

lives) of 999."[1]

The theory that every individual has an inalienable right to be governed only by those whom he chooses is even more erroneous. "All people have not right to such freedom; sometime whole nations, but commonly a part of every nation, should be compelled to consent."[2] Baxter reasons that if, as is commonly granted, nature or want of competent wealth may deprive infants, idiots, women, dependent servants, and paupers of "capacity for this freedom, much more will a mans wilful crimes deprive him of it."[3] Whole nations which should be deprived of the right of choosing their rulers are barbarous nations who are like wild beasts and aggressor nations who will relate to others only as conquerors or conquered.[4] Within a nation, wicked and criminal persons are much rather to be excluded than honest beggers. Among those whose crimes warrant exclusion from the liberty of being electors he lists blasphemers, idolators, "presumptuous transgressours against the public warning of Magistrates and Pastours," God despisers, kidnappers, murderers, etc.[1]

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[1] HC, p. 65. [2] Ibid., pp. 168-85. [3] Ibid., p. 172.

[4] Baxter's attitude toward barbarous nations would be most controversial today, his missionary zeal in particular: "If a poor barbarous Indian-Nation, like the Canibals, would not consent to hear the Gospel, or suffer Preachers to come among them, and to speak to a minor part that would hear, I am sure it hath an apparent tendency to their salvation to master them and to restrain them from murdering the Christians among them that had received the Gospel; and so long as we did them no hurt, but govern them and to force them to admit the Preachers, and did not deprive them of their Possessions, I know not what should exempt us from the Obligation of this work of Charity." Ibid., p. 170. Schlatter quotes part of this as illustrating Baxter's non-democratic thought with which "modern democrats would never agree." RB and Puritan Politics, p. 30. Baxter's views, however, were certainly more humane than the actual practice for the next three hundred years of democratic nations. For example, democratic Americans not only deprived barbarous peoples of their possessions but even enslaved them, something which Baxter called a "heinous sin." CD, IV, 218.

This does not mean, however, that all rights and personal liberties are to be taken from such men. ". . . it is a Burgership, or freedom of Governing or Choosing any Governors, Parliament, Justices, etc. that we speak of."[2] Their rights and property otherwise remain inviolable, except in so far as they forfeit them. But it does mean that men may not necessarily claim that they are not bound because they have not chosen their governors, as some of the radicals in the Army were claiming.

> As men are obliged to obey God, whether they consent or not; so are they to obey the laws of their sovereigns, though they never consented to them, no, not to their sovereignty, as long as they are members of that commonwealth, to the government whereof the sovereign is lawfully called. . . .[3]

The role of consent must be something other than the source of the authority of sovereigns and the source of an inalienable right of every individual to choose his governors.

To Baxter the fundamental source of these errors was in beginning the theory of government with the individual and his consent. If all governing power is derived ultimately from God, the question of the role of human choice must be set within this context to properly assess its role. As Baxter describes the issue in Chapter VII of _A Holy Commonwealth_, "Of the Foundation, efficient and conveying Causes, and meanes of Power ":

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[1] HC, pp. 168ff. [2] Ibid., p. 172. [3] CD, VI, 33.

> Our principal search then must be to find out the line of Derivation, how, and by what means this power is conveyed by God. And to that end, we must enquire what he hath done himself as part of his Universal standing Law, and what he hath left to be done, with variations according to the difference of time, and places and persons.[1]

The proper sphere of human choice is in determining those things which God has left undetermined in his universal law and providence. For the things that he has determined are not left to human choice, except in the sense that man can choose to obey or to be disobedient. God has determined that man shall live under political government and that the end of this government shall be the common order and good and his glory. Moreover, God's universal law in nature and Scripture is an obligatory norm for political government. Therefore, much of the laws that the sovereign should enact and enforce as part of his laws is not left to his choice.[2]

God has left undetermined, and therefore left to human choice, the form of government, that is, whether the government shall be a monarchy, a democracy, an aristocracy, or a mixed government, and the particular persons who shall serve as governors, although it should be noted that by his providence God sometimes determines what person should be chosen, for example, by making someone preeminently qualified over others for ruling.[1] In addition, much of the laws and the manner of administering these laws is left to human judgment under the general principles of God's law in nature and Scripture.

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[1] _HC_, p. 124. [2] _Ibid_., pp. 124ff.; _CD_, VI, 23ff.

To illustrate his understanding of how a government comes into effective existence and the role of consent in this, Baxter employs two illustrations. The first is that of marriage. When a woman marries, she chooses and consents to her husband. But the husband's authority comes directly from God. For God has ordained the family as an order of existence and has largely determined its nature and end. The political relationship is analogous. The second illustration is that of a corporation or town within a nation. The members of the corporation or town may choose officers, but the authority of those officers comes from the charter granted by the nation's sovereign. In like manner, every commonwealth is a subdivision of God's universal Kingdom, and the charter of the universal King in nature and Scripture is the origin

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1. "Where God doth not notably declare any person qualified above others . . . so that the case is not Notorious, but Controvertible, there the people must judge as well as they are able, according to Gods General Rules, or else refer it to a Lot." HC, p. 167.

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of the authority of each commonwealth's sovereign.[1]

Every commonwealth is therefore founded on two covenants.[2] The first of these is the covenant from God. God has indicated to man in nature and Scripture the terms on which he will govern him. The divine ordination of government as an order of existence and the general characteristics of this government are included in these terms. This ordination of government is the ultimate origin of the authority of every human sovereign. Men have no choice concerning its terms except to choose to consent or to rebel, and even here, if they rebel they are not free from the dire consequences of their choice. The second covenant is between the people or their representatives and the sovereign and determines on the basis of their consent the matters left undetermined by God, the form of the government, etc. "The Genus and part of the Species being ordained by God himself, the mutable Form . . . and the determination of the Person or Line is by men, and that is by mutual Consent and Contract."[3]

This covenant or contract is the constitution of the commonwealth, and all consequent actions of ruler and ruled are to

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1. HC, pp. 191-92; CD, VI, 24-25.

2. ". . . the people are first to be engaged with God, and then with the Prince as Gods officer: and on these terms are Princes to hold their power." HC, p. 31.

3. Of National Churches, p. 3.

be in accord with its terms. It need not be in writing or even explicit, for it is found in the customs of the nation, as well as in the oaths of the sovereign and in the charter or laws in which consent to govern and be governed on such and such terms is given.[1] As this constitution was established by consent, so it can be changed by the consent of all the parties to it. "And therefore we need not in this land go to the Original of the Common-wealth to know the Constitution; For whereever it is to be found that Prince and people have thus or thus Consented, so much of the Constitution is found."[2]

Baxter's use of contract can be compared to Edmund Burke's, who wrote:

> Society is indeed a contract . . . but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee . . . to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence. . . . Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primaeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and moral natures, each in their appointed places.[3]

In Baxter's thought the "fixed compact" is the constitution of God's government of the world. The contract that brings each commonwealth into existence is the clause, or in Baxter's phrasing, the by-laws, to this greater constitution. For the very fact that men are to enter into such a covenant among themselves and the principal terms of this covenant is already given in that higher constitution.

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[1] HC, p. 430.

[2] Ibid., pp. 197-98.

[3] Reflections on the French Revolution (New York: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1910), pp. 93-94.

The Nature of Political Government

Baxter defines political government as "the exercise of the moral means of laws, and execution by a ruler, for the right ordering of the subjects actions, to the good of society."[1] Political authority differs from the influences a man might have on others through his strength, wisdom, goodness, learning, etc., which are sometimes called authority, because of the right to oblige through law for the sake of the common good of society.[2]

The one who has this authority is variously called governor, prince, king, sovereign, etc. The power or authority is called *summa potestas* or sovereignty, which is the

> Highest Power of Governing the Common-wealth, and the Fountain of all inferiour Power. As Power or Authority is *Jus Regendi*, a Right to Govern, so the Soveraigns power in special consisteth in the only Right of making the Universal Laws of the Common-wealth, and conveying

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[1] *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*, *Works*, XX, 495.

[2] *HC*, p. 70.

> Authority to inferiour Governours, and having the Highest Power of Judgment, from which there is no appeal to any but God.[1]

Baxter recognized three functions of government: legislation, judgment, and execution. The highest of these is legislation.[2] Indeed, the essence of sovereignty is the right to make law, so that whoever has the highest right to make the universal laws of a commonwealth holds sovereignty. Judgment and execution, on the other hand, are frequently delegated to others.[3] But though these powers might be delegated, they should not be separated but kept in the hands of the sovereign, whether the sovereign be one or many natural persons, in order to avoid confusion. The highest judicial appeal in any case should not be delegated.[4]

Because the sovereign possesses the highest right to make the laws of the commonwealth, he is above its laws in the sense that he may change, repeal, pardon the breach of, and be immune

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1. HC, p. 69. Cf. p. 317.

2. Ibid., p. 317. The relation between these powers is seen in Baxter's definition of each: "Law, Judgment and Execution (the three parts of Government) differ in that, 1. Law maketh the Debitum or Jus; 2. Judgement determineth of it by decisive application; 3. Execution distributeth according to it." Catholick Theologie, p. 53.

3. HC, p. 70.

4. Ibid., p. 62. In England the sovereign was King in Parliament, and of course, Parliament was both the highest legislative and judicial body in England. Baxter was therefore describing and advocating actual English practice.

from being punished for breaking those laws.[1] But he in no sense possesses absolute authority. First of all, since his authority is granted to him by God to promote the common good and obedience to God's law, he may not do anything against these. If he does, it is an act of rebellion, not of authority.[2] As Baxter describes this limitation of the sovereign's power, God has determined:

> 1. That he doe all in a due subordination to God the fountaine of Authority: 2. That he frame all his Laws and execution so that they may be a means to the ends of Governments, viz. both the neerest end, the Order, peace, and happinesse, Corporall, and spirituall of the Commonwealth: and the ultimate end, the Pleasing of God in our salvation for ever.
>
> If any of the Laws of men be totally Cross to the fountaine and the end, or make against them in the maine, they are Nullities and private prohibited acts, of no authority: No forces, no advantages, no power, no engagement of men, can authorize any man against God, or against the salvation of our soules, and the Common safety of the people. And this on a twofold account: 1. Because they are without Authority: 2. Because they are against the Chiefe Authority.[3]

Indeed, one may speak of human sovereignty only analogically, for sovereignty, the highest right to govern, belongs to God alone. All human sovereignty is limited and derived from this true sovereignty and extends no further than the authority so granted.[4]

Political government is further limited by the existence of other divinely ordained orders whose authority, duties, and liberties the sovereign must respect. For in addition to political government, God has ordained three other orders of government, self government, family government, and Church government, each of which has its proper sphere of authority into which none of the others, including the political sovereign, may intrude.[1] "Each," Baxter explains, "have their proper work and end, which none of the others can forbid."[2]

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[1] HC, p. 72; CD, VI, 95. [2] HC, p. 72. [3] Ibid., p.111.

[4] Ibid., p. 338; The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 198; A Sheet in Reference to the Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford, pp. 153-55.

The first of these orders of government and duties in order of nature under God is self government. As was shown in the discussion of conscience and private judgment, Baxter held that every man must ultimately bear responsibility for a self discernment of his duty to God, and "no king can take this from us: and if they forbid us any necessary duty to God, or necessary means of our salvation, they do so without authority, and are not therein to be obeyed."[3] Next in order after self government is the government of parents over their children, and children have a duty to obey their parents.

> A parent's power to rule his children is for the necessary education of them, for the welfare of soul and body, and the king hath no power to forbid it. Should he forbid parents to feed their children, or teach them God's laws, or choose for them orthodox, fit tutors, pastors, and church

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[1] The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 23ff.; HC, pp. 55-57; The Poor Man's Family Book, Works, XIX, 404-05.

[2] The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 25.

[3] Ibid., pp. 25, 197.

> communion where God is lawfully worshipped, and should he command the children to the contrary, it is all null and powerless.[1]

Finally the sovereign must relate his authority over man to the authority granted to pastors, whom God has empowered with the spiritual sword as a coordinate power with the temporal sword of the civil power. He may not deny or forbid pastors their duty, and therefore right, to exercise their authority because "it is God hath Instituted both the Offices, and therefore neither of them can change his Institutions, nor wrong the Office of each other, by any deprivation."[2]

One of the most interesting aspects of Baxter's political thought is his extension of those duties into rights and liberties. Since men have indispensable duties, they must have the rights or liberties necessary to fulfill these duties. Baxter nowhere uses the term "inalienable rights." But he clearly holds that there are rights that can be neither given away by or taken from men. A conqueror can force men to consent to be ruled by him "to escape a greater mischief." "But," Baxter continues, "I think none by consent can give away more than their own, nor of that of their own, which God forbiddeth them to give away, viz., whatever is necessary to his service and their salvation, and their indispensable duty to others."[1]

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[1] The Catechising of Families, Works, XIX, 25.

[2] HC, p. 292.

On the other hand, Baxter believed that one of the most dangerous errors of his day was the misuse of rights and liberty as a pretext for license. He wrote in warning:

> Take heed of mistaking the nature of that liberty of the people which is truly valuable and desirable, and contending for an undesirable liberty in its stead. It is desirable to have liberty to do good, and to possess our own, and enjoy God's mercies, and live in peace: but it is not desirable to have liberty to sin, and abuse one another, and hinder the Gospel, and contemn our governors. Some mistake liberty for an exemption from government, and think they are most free, when they are ungoverned, and may do what they list: but this is a misery, and not a mercy, and therefore was never purchased for us by Christ.[2]

Rights and liberty must therefore never be separated from duty. True liberty to Baxter is a freedom for, not a freedom from. Perfect freedom is realized when we are able to do what we ought, not when we are absolutely unrestrained. But so long as rights and freedom were grounded in duty, he did not hesitate to speak the language of liberty and rights.

What, then, are these rights and liberties? Baxter summarized them:

> Though the people have not any Soveraignty or Governing Power as people, yet have they a certain Right to that Common good which is the End of Government, and each man hath that propriety in his life and faculties, and Children, and Estate, and Honour, that no Rulers may justly

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[1] _A Sheet in Reference to the Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford_, p. 153.

[2] _CD_, VI, 95.

> take from him; which Right as it is secured partly by the Law of Nature, partly by other Laws or Institutions of God, and partly by the specifying Fundamental Contract of the Commonwealth, are commonly called (the Liberties of the People.)[1]

The two covenants which together regulate commonwealths determine what the liberties or rights of the people are. The covenant with God, which creates rights by imposing duties, regulates all commonwealths alike and determines what shall be all men's rights, by the fact of their being men. Among these Baxter cites a people's right that government be for the common good and a right of every individual to a property in his life, children, possessions, and honour.

Baxter's use of "property" in a comprehensive sense is similar to Locke's. As to property in the modern sense, he calls this "dominion" and holds that it is prior to political government: "Dominion is in order of nature antecedent to Government, and may be out of a Common-wealth as truly as in it."[2] He also limits the right of property, as does Locke.

> Occupation of it be agreeable to the Law of Nature (when men are under no other Law), that is, if it be not of another mans nor of an undue proportion, etc. may occasion a true Propriety. But if the occupant would seize. . . more than Nature alloweth as a proportion for one man, and tendeth to the Common hurt of the Community, or mankind, here he hath no Title and may be dispossest.[3]

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1. HC, p. 69. 2. Ibid., p. 113. 3. Ibid., pp. 113-14.

He would thus reject the absolute right of private property which occured under laissez faire theory in its Nineteenth Century form. For property rights, like all others, are to be directed to the common good. But he also rejects the idea that the only rights are positive or legal rights. His solution of the tension between "rights" and the "common good" is that rights are antecedent to government but government directs them to the common good.

In addition to the rights secured to man in the inalienable rights of nature, the constitution of a particular commonwealth, the mutual contract between the sovereign and the people determining the form and powers of the government which are left undetermined by the covenant with God, may reserve certain additional rights to the people of that commonwealth. The constitution or "fundamental laws" therefore serve as a further limitation on the sovereign. In England the constitution provided that the King and Parliament should share the sovereignty, that the King could not levy taxes without Parliament's consent, that there was to be a trial by jury of one's peers, etc. These were the rights of Englishmen, not universal rights belonging to all men. But they limited the prerogative of the English sovereign, nevertheless, and might not be taken from the people without their consent. Should the sovereign act contrary either to the constitution or the law of God in nature and Scripture, such acts are without authority.[1]

Since political government exists to serve the common good and to fulfill the will of God, the powers of rulers is given to them as a trust, not to further their own interests. As Baxter elaborates this:

> The _jus regendi_ is not like meer Dominion (I mean Propriety,) which is but a power of right to use and dispose of things as our own, and for our selves. But it is like the office of a Physician, School-master, Pilot, etc. who are principally for the good of others, and but secondarily for their own reward and honour.[2]

On this basis he admonished magistrates to "be sure that it be not self but God, that is your ultimate end, and next to that, the public good. Let the pleasing and honouring of God, and the benefit of men, be the very thing that you intend and seek; and not any carnal content in your own exaltation, or power, or honour."[3] To put Baxter's point succinctly in modern language, the state is under God and is for the people, not the people for the state and the state the highest good.

The Right of Resistance

The immediate and critical question is: What can be done if rulers abuse their powers? Is there a right to check rulers and ultimately to resist them? Medieval political thought and Hooker had a constitutional theory of government and therefore held that rulers are subject to law. But they proposed no effective means of putting this theory into practice except to appeal to God and the conscience of the King. The early Protestants in England, Tyndal and Cranmer, for example, denied any right to resist. The early Puritans themselves were reluctant to adopt a right of resistance. In addition to the theological arguments for non-resistance, the Puritans needed the support of the monarchy to reform England, and to teach a doctrine of resistance would have forfeited any hope of that support. For from the beginning Protestants were defensive about the charge that their doctrine was to "wrest the scepters from the hands of kings, to cast down all courts and judgments, to subvert all orders and civil governments, to disrupt the peace and quiet of the people, to abolish all laws, to scatter all lordships and possessions - in short, to turn everything upside down!"[1] Moreover, the natural means of opposing the claims of the Papacy was to assert the sovereignty of kings and to deny Christians a right to resist them. Finally, the Puritans had a genuine fear of rebellion.

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[1] _HC_, pp. 69ff. [2] _Ibid_. p.161.

[3] _Directions to Justices of Peace_, _Works_, XV, 539-40.

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[1] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, edited John T. McNeill, (vols. XX and XXI of the Library of Christian Classics; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), XX, 10. Knappen says of the Puritans before the Revolutionary period: "With one or two notable exceptions this doctrine of passive resistance was the burden of Puritan sermons, petitions and pamphlets throughout the century." Op. cit., p. 4.

> The absolute enemy for Calvinists was a merely popular, democratic revolt, without tarrying for the magistrate. For this would lead to 'anarchy,' to 'the many-headed monster,' to license for the ungodly to behave and believe as they wished: it would threaten the overthrow of all social subordination and all discipline.[1]

When they finally did adopt a theory of resistance, it was a conservative theory qualified to prevent anarchy and to distinguish lawful resistance from unlawful rebellion.

The source of the doctrine of resistance which the Puritans adopted at the time of the Puritan revolution was John Calvin, although his followers carried the doctrine much farther than Calvin himself did. Calvin certainly had no intention of fomenting rebellion.[2] He strongly insisted that private subjects do not have a right to resist. But he made one exception to the denial of resistance. Citing lesser magistrates and the three estates, he wrote:

> I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidity, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance.[3]

This exception was to be of immense practical as well as theoretical significance because "by its means the medieval tradition of the higher law as the rule of government was effectively related to the one institution which in the circumstances was in a position to make it good, the estates-general and parliaments of the European kingdoms."[1] This theory, in essence, is also that of Richard Baxter.

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[1] Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, p. 24.

[2] Op. cit., XX, lxvi; XXI,1513-17. [3] Ibid.,XXI, 1519.

There has been considerable misinterpretation of Baxter's theory of the limitation of sovereigns and the right of resistance. Richard Schlatter says Baxter's theory was ". . . a rather confused theory of rebellion which said, in effect, that resistance by the sober and godly to tyranny is legitimate, and all other resistance is sinful."[2] James Phillips says that Baxter can not be credited with limiting monarchy because in Baxter's theory "since the prince was at the top of the social hierarchy . . . he was responsible to no man but to God alone. Thus there was no way for human beings to check on whether a prince was living up to the responsibilities of his calling, for that investigation was supposed to be left to the Almighty."[3]

The source of these misunderstanding of Baxter's theory of resistance is that Baxter insisted, like Calvin, that private subjects have not the right to resist. If a sovereign commands them, they must judge his commands against the law of God and must not obey if the thing commanded is unlawful. But a private citizen may not go beyond this refusal to obey. "Resist not," Baxter admonishes, "where you can not actually obey: and let no appearance of probable good that might come to yourselves, or the church by any unlawful means (as treason, sedition, or rebellion) ever tempt you to it."[1] And certainly there is no right to refuse lawful commands, for this would be contrary to the subjection to rulers commanded by God.

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[1] Nichols, op. cit., p. 25.

[2] RB and Puritan Politics, p. 39.

[3] Op. cit., pp. 323-24.

The error is in supposing that because Baxter denies private citizens the right to call a sovereign to account or to resist him that there is no consistent way to check or resist abuse of power. Baxter believed there is such a way and that "there is a Resistance not contrary to subjection: and that is not forbidden."[2] Though resistance by individual private citizens is not permitted, resistance as a public act by the whole people or by their representatives is lawful.[3] "In general," he explains, "its lawfull for them that have part in the Sovereignty to defend their part: and its lawful for the people to defend their Liberties, in points exempted from the Princes Power."[4]

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[1] CD, VI, 63. Cf. HC, pp. 349ff., 368, 371.

[2] HC, p. 352.

[3] Schlatter's error is his mistaking the criteria of lawful and unlawful resistance.

[4] HC, p. 470.

Lawful resistance is resistance by those who do so as a public act. Because of this necessity Baxter admits, "Where there are not Assemblies representing the People, or some Trustees enabled to be the Preservers of their Liberties, it will be hard to imagine how a Warre can lawfully be raised for their Defence, . . . unlesse where they are almost all of a mind."[1] Unless there are representatives who can act in behalf of the people, the people would have to act as a body, which, as Baxter suggests, would require almost unanimous agreement.

In England there was, of course, such a body of representatives and trustees, Parliament. Moreover, Parliament shared part of the sovereignty in England since the constitution was a mixed monarchy. Therefore the Parliament could call the King to account and resist him if he unlawfully tried to deprive the people of their just liberty or if he tried to take away Parliament's part of the sovereignty. For "if Prince, Senate, or People alone . . . shall of themselves without the Consent of the other part, dissolve or change the Constitution, they perfidiously destroy the Foundation, (if it be the substantial points) and put themselves in a state of enmity with the other part."[2] Against the Divine Right of Kings and the denial of resistance Baxter argued: "If Princes violating their Covenants, and changing the Constitution, be not resisted, then all Princes have equal power, that is, their power is absolute and unlimited to man. For then they may all do what they list; which if we tell them, their list to exalt their Wills and Interest will be insatiable." "If Princes were sent down from Heaven, or meer Nature produced Governing Families, this Doctrine might have some pretence, which now hath none."[1]

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[1] HC, p. 452.

[2] Ibid., p. 197.

As to the people's liberties, if men may defend their lives and women their chastity, "Much more should a Nation preserve themselves, or their Representative Body, from the unjust endeavours of a King, that would destroy them."[2]

Baxter's doctrine of resistance is conservative. He not only limited resistance to a public act, he also conservatively limited the conditions which justify resistance. "Every breach of Oath or Covenant by the Prince," Baxter warned, "Will not Warrant the people to depose him, or disobey him."[3] As not every fault of a husband dissolves a marriage, so is it in the political covenant.[4] Subjects must obey in many things, though they are unjustly commanded. For example, they may have a duty to pay taxes, though they were unnecessarily imposed.[5] In other things they must not obey but may not resist. And there are other occasions when the sovereign must be resisted in a particular act without resisting his right to govern, that is, without deposing him. "As there is a great difference between his injustice in a particular act and the Nullity of his Power; so is there great difference between Resisting an unjust act, and Resisting his office in the main, and denying his office."[1] The right to depose rulers should only be used in fundamental matters and then only as a last resort. For resistance can bring on greater evil than the injustice it would restrain.

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[1] HC, pp. 449-50.

[2] Ibid., p. 385 (misnumbered p. 417).

[3] Ibid., p. 373.

[4] King James His Abdication of the Crown Plainly Proved, p. 163.

[5] HC, pp. 357-58.

The conservatism of Baxter's doctrine of revolution is evident in the minimal conditions which he believed legitimizes a government. The conditions are: 1. The government must intend and preserve the being of the commonwealth. 2. Conditions are better under the government than they would be without it. 3. Justice is more prevalent than injustice, that is, "the Rulers in the maine be not a terror to good workes but to evill." 4. God's universal sovereignty is acknowledged.[2] So long as a government fulfills these conditions, it should not be deposed. He set such minimal conditions because he believed that there were very few good rulers, and that generally even tyrants are preferable to anarchy.[3]

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[1] HC, p. 373. [2] Ibid., pp. 129ff.

[3] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

Yet twice in his lifetime Baxter supported resistance to Kings on the basis of his theory of lawful resistance. In justification of his support of the war against Charles I he wrote: "I had reason to believe that if the King had conquered Parliament, The Nation had lost all security of their Liberties, and been at his Mercy, and not only under his government."[1] In Charles's case he did not believe that the King had forfeited his office. And though he favored restraining "the king's misguided will" he did not desire to depose him, much less to kill him.[2] On the other hand, he believed that James II had forfeited his office and deposed himself by his attempt at "delivering up the Kingdom so far to a Foreign Jurisdiction" - the Pope.[3]

It should be further noted that in both cases Baxter based the right of resistance primarily on the constitution of England, not on disobedience to the laws of God. Constitutionalism was not, therefore, a mere abstract or peripheral doctrine in Baxter's thought. Both in theory and in practice it was a vital and pervasive ingredient. And when he had to choose between swearing that "it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take up arms against the king" and being imprisoned, he chose prison.[1]

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[1] HC, p. 478. [2] Reliquiae, I, 38.

[3] King James His Abdication of the Crown Plainly Proved, p. 159.

The End of Political Government

Baxter wrote far more, however, in defence of the broad scope of the sphere of political government than he did in limitation of it. The basis on which he argued for this was the end of political government. Certainly the existence of the other three divinely ordained governments limit the sovereign. "But it belongeth to the magistrates only (though not to destroy any of the three former governments, which are all before his in nature and time), yet to govern them all, by directing the exercise of them in lawful things to the common good."[2] Since this oversight of society as a whole for the promotion of the common good was intrusted to the sovereign, no part of society could escape his concern. Thus though he must not infringe on the exercise of the powers of the other divinely ordained governments and the liberty necessary thereto, this is not to say that he has nothing to do with them. The duty to promote the common good requires oversight of all lesser goods. And if the sovereign may not exceed his limits, neither should he be restrained from fulfilling the duty given him by God.[1]

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[1] On June 11, 1669, Baxter was given the choice of subscribing to the Oxford Oath, which contained this clause, and jail. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment. Settled in jail, he immediately set himself to complete _The Character of a Sound Confirmed Christian_. For Baxter's detailed explanation for his reasons in not subscribing, see _Reliquiae_, II, 422 ff.

[2] _The Catechising of Families_, _Works_, XIX, 25.

Baxter posited an ascending scale of ends to which political government must tend. The nearest end, he explains, is "the good order of the body procured by the administration," or "the orderly state and behaviour of society."[2] The immediate end of political government is thus order and justice. This end, however, is only a means to an intermediate and an ultimate end. The intermediate end is the common good. The ultimate end of political government is the everlasting happiness of men and the glory of God.[3] The Sectarian Democrats agreed that government exists to promote justice and the common good. Baxter could therefore take this for granted as he argued for more than they would grant, in particular, that government is instituted to serve all of these ends, not merely to secure corporal order and justice.

Against those who agreed that government is instituted to promote the common good but who defined the common good in purely corporal terms, Baxter argued that the end of man is eternal happiness, and all means, including political government, must be estimated by their tendency to that end. Therefore, not power and prosperity but holiness or goodness must be accounted as the chief part of the good life and the common good since holiness most promotes man's ultimate good, the enjoyment of God in eternity.[1]

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[1] HC, p. 107. [2] Ibid., p. 61. [3] Ibid.

If the ultimate concern of political government must be the spiritual well being of the members of the commonwealth and the achievement of a holy society to the glory of God, two questions immediately are raised: What is the relationship of the sovereign to religion and the Church and what polity or form of government will best promote the immediate and ultimate ends of political government? These questions will be dealt with in the two remaining chapters.

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[1] HC, pp. 79-80.

CHAPTER V

THE MAGISTRATE AND RELIGION

The relation of the magistrate to religion and the Church was a controversial and fundamental question in the Seventeenth Century because the position taken on this issue basically determined the shape of the social and political order to be erected on the ruins of the medieval synthesis. The problem permeated Baxter's political activity and thought. It was the issue of Church government which originally occasioned his involvement in politics and his study of political theory, and the question continued to be the center of his public activities and his political and social thought. As has been shown, the context of Baxter's thought was the ideological and power struggle between the various groups, Erastians, Presbyterians, Prelatists, Sectarians, Independents, Papists, etc., who sought to establish their theory of government in Seventeenth Century England. Brief reference to the background of the emergence of their theories of Church government has been made in Chapters I and II. Those theories need, however, more detailed consideration here.

Erastian and Reformed Protestantism

J. W. Allen's assertion that "what we call the Reformation was, in one aspect, the definitive triumph of secular authority in the struggle with the Church already centuries old"[1] sets the question of Church and state in the Seventeenth Century in perspective. Since the Norman conquest the English monarchy had struggled to gain control of the church.[2] It sought control because the very possibility of a centralized and absolute monarchy depended upon it, for the Church had a "monopoly of thought-control and opinion-forming."[1] Henry VIII was motivated more by this concern than any desire for doctrinal or ethical reform. Therefore his "Reformation" should be seen first of all against the background of this struggle to control the English Church. The first principle of Henry and his successors regarding the "religious question" was that the crown should control the church.

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[1] A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, p. xiii. The quotation continues, "In one country after another, the secular government established its local control of the Church, absorbing in the process much, at least, of its property and jurisdiction." Ibid.

[2] For an early example of the Erastian claims of the English monarchy see "The Constitutions of Clarendon, A.D. 1164" in Gee, op. cit., pp. 68-73. For a discussion or Erastianism see Figgis, "Erastus and Erastianism," The Divine Right of Kings, pp. 293-342. Phillip B. Secor outlines the struggle for control of the Church in terms of three issues: the temporal issue involving the right of the Papacy to grant the Kingdom as a fief, the administrative issue involving control of clerical appointments, holding synods, etc., and the spiritual issue of whether the King was the final appeal in ecclesiastical as well as temporal cases. Secor rightly emphasizes the continuity of the Erastian claims of the English monarchy after the Reformation with its earlier claims, claims which resulted in Henry's being proclaimed "the only supreme head in earth of the church of England, called Anglicana Ecclesia." Phillip B. Secor, "Richard Hooker and the Christian Commonwealth," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1959), pp. 4ff.

There were genuine religious reformers such as William Tyndale and Archbishop Cranmer in England from the beginning of the break with Rome. But far from opposing the principle of the crown's supremacy in the church, they fostered it both indirectly by dividing and weakening the Church and directly by supporting it in their teaching.[2] As J. N. Figgis suggests, the early Protestant doctrine of Church and state placed "all ecclesiastical authority below the jurisdiction and subject to the control of the

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[1] Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, p. 32. No one recognized more the importance of the pulpit than Hobbes, who insisted that the control of the pulpit was essential to the state because there was no other means whereby "the multitude should ever learn their duty, but from the pulpit and upon holidays." Behemoth, p. 51.

[2] For the political thought of the early English reformers see Knappen, op. cit.; Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century; Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings and Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, 1414-1625; and E. G. Rupp, Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition (Cambridge: The University Press, 1949).

'Godly prince,' who is omnipotent in his own dominion."[1] The Reformation's cry that "the sole power was the word of Christ and the sword which he has committed to the powers"[2] meant the rejection of the Gelasion concept of two independent sets of magistrates, civil and ecclesiastical, leaving the civil magistrate as the supreme authority.[3] Further, the twin doctrines of the Divine Right of Kings and passive obedience, doctrines taught by Tyndale and Cranmer, left the King not only supreme in both Church and state but free of any checks save his own conscience and God. In Tyndale's England, in Luther's Germany, and in Zwingli's Switzerland the immediate consequences of the Reformation for the political order was to encourage the growth of absolute monarchy and the limitation of the Church to a department of the state.

The central tenet of English Protestant Erastianism was that the civil magistrate is sovereign in religious as well as temporal affairs. The theories articulated in support of this contention in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries differed.[4] The basic argument of the Anglican Royalists, who might be called religious Erastians, was relatively unsophisticated: The essential tenets of the Christian faith are few, clear and universally accepted among Protestants. All other matters are indifferent and are to be left to authority to determine. The civil magistrate, idealized as the godly prince, is the supreme authority in ecclesiastical as well as temporal matters. Christian obedience requires obedience to these powers that be, and resistance will incur damnation.

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[1] Figgis, Studies in Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, p. 55.

[2] This was the justification of pre-Calvin Geneva's break with Rome. Foster, op. cit., p. 7.

[3] Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, p. 5.

[4] See Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, Allen, English Political Thought, 1603-1660; Sabine, op. cit.; Sanders, op. cit.; and Jordan, I, II, and III.

Other arguments went beyond this. Richard Hooker used a sophisticated analysis of law to further strengthen the case for obedience. Other Royalists, notably Filmer in his Patriarcha, refined the doctrine of Divine Right of Kings. Thomas Hobbes, who might be called a secular Erastian, raised his absolute sovereign on the foundation of the social contract. All agreed, however, in stressing the necessity of submission to the mediate authority of the civil magistrate in ecclesiastical as in temporal affairs, an argument which pushed to its extreme conclusion denied an independent jurisdiction for the Church. As Hobbes expressed this extreme conclusion, a Church

> is the same thing with a Civil Common-wealth consisting of Christian men; and is called a Civill State, for that the subjects of it are Men; and a Church, for that the subjects here are Christians. Temporall and Spirituall Government, are but two words brought into the world, to make men see double and mistake their Lawfull Sovereign. . . . There is therefore no other Government in this life, neither

> of State, nor Religion, but Temporall; nor teaching of any doctrine, lawfull to any Subject, which the Governour both of the State, and of the Religion, forbiddeth to be taught; And that Governour must be one; or else there must needs follow Faction, and Civil war in the Common-wealth, between the Church and State; between Spiritualists, and Temporalists; between the Sword of Justice, and the Shield of Faith; and (which is more) in every Christian mans own breast, between the Christian and the Man.[1]

Or, as John Selden more succinctly stated it, "There's no such thing as spiritual jurisdiction; all is civil, the church's is the same with the lord mayor's."[2]

There was, however, another Protestant tradition, the Reformed or Calvinistic tradition, which was developing on the Continent and which after Henry's death began to become influential in England. Relative to Protestant Erastianism, Calvin and his disciples emphasized the independence of the Church from the civil magistrate. The theoretical basis on which Calvin based this independence was the medieval doctrine of the two jurisdictions or the two swords.[3] As J. W. Allen points out, the main division in political thought of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century was over this doctrine.[1] It was adherence to it that made Calvinist and Papist fundamentally alike in comparison with either Hobbes or Hooker. Calvin differed, however, from Roman Catholic thought in deriving the power of the civil magistrate directly from God rather than indirectly through the spiritual power. Moreover, he gave the civil magistrate greater independence and a much more active role in religion than did Roman Catholic thought.[2] In this sense he stood between Erastian and Papal thought.

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[1] Leviathan, pp. 252-53.

[2] Table Talk, p. 88. Cited in Jordan, III, 487.

[3] See John Calvin, "Epistle Dedicatory to the Syndics and Council of Geneva," Commentary on the Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949).

Calvin's ideal was a holy, theocratic community in which the pastors and magistrates held independent but cooperative power in a common obedience to God. William Haller describes the Church's role as the

> Augustinian and Calvinistic ideal of the church as the city of God, the kingdom of Christ on earth, the divinely inspired organ of spiritual life in human society, having reciprocal relations with the rulers of this world but acting in complete independence of their authority. Its task was to render men obedient first to God and then under God to Caesar, whose first duty was to obey God as his church might direct. The church in its obedience instructed both rulers and subjects in theirs.[3]

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[1] _A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century_, p. 11. George H. Sabine states the broader significance of the reality for which this doctrine stands in these terms: "The rise of the Christian Church, as a distinct institution entitled to govern the spiritual concerns of man-kind in independence of the state, may not unreasonably be described as the most revolutionary event in the history of western Europe, in respect both to politics and political philosophy." _Op. cit._, p. 180.

[2] For Calvin's advice to an English ruler, see Calvin's letter of October 1548 to the Lord Protector Somerset, _Letters of John Calvin_, edited by Jules Bonnet, (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, n.d.), II, 182-98.

[3] _The Rise of Puritanism_, pp. 11-12.

The party in Seventeenth Century England which most faithfully followed John Calvin were the Presbyterians. Samuel Rutherford and Robert Baylie were the most influential spokesmen for Presbyterianism immediately after the Revolution, for they had the weight of Scotland behind them. Outside of London there were actually few Presbyterians in England. But they and their allies were a majority in Parliament and in the Westminster Assembly. In 1644 it seemed that the Presbyterians would succeed in establishing Presbyterianism in England. This would have meant a national established Church governed through an ascending level of Church courts. Most important, everyone would be subject to Church discipline both in his beliefs and actions. The magistrate, as the "nursing father" of the church, would be intrusted with the duty of promoting true religion and suppressing heresy but, he would himself be subject to Church discipline like all men.[1]

The Presbyterians were thwarted in their attempt to impose their rule over England by an alliance between Parliamentary Erastians, Sectarians, and Independents. Of these, the Independents were most influential. The Independents were so called because they believed that each particular congregation should be self governing or independent. They therefore rejected the Presbyterian synods with their binding power over the Churches. Their Churches, moreover, were governed "democratically" by majority vote of the whole congregation, not "magisterially" by pastors and elders.

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[1] Jordan, III, 44ff., 267ff.

They were advocates of a religious liberty more tolerant than the Presbyterians, This is what gained for them the support of the Sectarians. They did not, however, believe in unlimited freedom of religion or conscience. For they believed the Christian religion should be supported by the magistrate and taught that the magistrate must suppress false religion, though he could not compel men to embrace the truth. To this degree they shared the characteristic intolerance of the Seventeenth Century. The Independents were a minority in the Westminster Assembly and in Parliament. They were, however, a powerful minority, and with the help of their Erastian and Sectarian allies prevented the Presbyterians from effectively practicing their more intolerant ideas and finally pushed them from the center of the stage as Cromwell, who was an Independent, became Protector.[1]

All of these polities, Erastian, Presbyterian, and Independent, gave the magistrate a responsibility toward religion and the Church. Erastianism made him supreme in the Church. Presbyterianism regarded him as the Church's nursing father and first member whose first task was to promote the true religion. The Independents wanted a loosely confederated national establishment and kept the Church and civil covenant in relationship, though more separate than either Erastianism or Presbyterianism.

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[1] 1. Jordan, III, 95ff., 347ff.

The Sectarians, however, severed the Church and civil covenants entirely, abandoned the ideal of a Christian political order for holy, gathered or voluntary Churches, and completely rejected the intrusion of the magistrate into religion.[1] They proposed, therefore, a radical break from the belief and practice of centuries of Western history and of the very great majority of Englishmen in the Seventeenth Century.[2]

Although to the Sectarians the new freedom under Cromwell's policy of toleration was the first step toward a free Church in a free society, to the majority who regarded religion as the soul and cement of the nation, the diversity and disunity which followed the failure to establish religious order was an intolerable chaos. As a group the Puritans found themselves in an agonizing tension between their desire for liberty and their hope for reformation. "Having sought liberty, expecting reformation, they found that they

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1. Jordan, III, 452ff.

2. Including, contrary to Schlatter, Hobbes and Harrington. Schlatter asserts that Hobbes and Harrington believed in a secular state. Hobbes was certainly a secularist, and Harrington may have been, but they believed that the state should concern itself with religious questions. That in Hobbes's Leviathan the state prescribes every aspect of religion and authorizes all religious leaders and practices is well established. Harrington is not as far from Hobbes's Erastianism as might be supposed. "His ideal is the virtuous commonwealth which is both church and state; his

had achieved not reformation but only liberty, without which, however, no reformation was possible at all."[1] "The question was no longer how to reform the church under the conditions brought about by revolution but how, under those conditions and with the church disrupted, to establish and maintain some sort of spiritual unity and constitutional order in the community."[2] This dilemma was the context in which Baxter formulated his theory of the relationship of the magistrate and religion.

The Nature of the Two Jurisdictions

Baxter's theory of the magistrate's relation to religion and the Church begins with the medieval ideal of the one Christian community, the respublica Christiana, governed mediately under God by spiritual and temporal magistrates, two "distinct" but "coordinate" powers or orders.[3] The powers are coordinate because each

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national religion is no mere Erastian solution to the problem of religious order." Charles Blitzer, An Immortal Commonwealth: The Political Thought of James Harrington (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960).

[1] Haller, Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution, p. xv.

[2] Ibid., p. xiv.

[3] Ch. X, "Of the Soveraigns power over the Pastors of the Church, and the differences of their Offices," HC, pp. 285ff.

is essential to the well being of the Christian community. "It is," Baxter explained, "a dead Commonwealth (and that is none, but a meer carkass) that is without the Magistrate: And it is a mad Commonwealth (which is little better than none) that is without a Church and Ministry."[1] They are also coordinate because "Magistracy and Ministry are each of them immediately and coordinately from Christ, and neither of them from each other."[2] They are distinct in the separation of the offices by Christ, in the difference of their manner of government, in the difference in the nature and extent of the Church and political covenants, and in the difference in the nearest end of each government.[3]

Although he accepted the essential elements of the medieval doctrine of the two powers, Baxter differed from the medieval theory in several respects. Whereas the respublica Christiana of the medieval age encompassed the universal Christian community, Baxter thought in terms of the nation state as the due sphere of any one sovereign. In particular, he rejected the Pope's universal sovereignty. "A Universal Human Monarchy is impossible, it being beyond the capacity of anyone to so govern; the more to blame the Pope for pretending to it; God only can govern all the world."[4] Nor was Baxter's Church the elaborately graduated medieval hierarchy but congregational Churches formed by covenant each under the discipline and ministry of its own pastor.[1] Finally, whereas the tendency of medieval thought was to exalt the spiritual power over the civil, Baxter tended to exalt the civil over the spiritual.

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[1] HC, p. 269.

[2] Ibid., pp. 285-86.

[3] Ibid., pp. 220ff.

[4] Ibid., p. 288.

It is not difficult to explain why Baxter tended to elevate the magistrate over the minister. The strong Erastian tradition in England, the need to defend Puritanism against the charge that it was incompatible with monarchy, the usefulness of the doctrine of the supremacy of the magistrate in ecclesiastical cases in refuting the Papal pretensions, etc., all these factors affected Baxter. Moreover, Baxter blamed the divisions in the English Church on the clergy and believed that no peace was possible until they were deprived of any power over the magistrate that enabled them to use his sword to promote their narrow party interest to the corruption of Church and state. The English nation had rejected both Prelacy and Presbyterianism because men feared power exercised by a persecuting clergy. Baxter himself blamed the Prelates and Presbyterians as fully as the Sectarians for the divided condition of the English Church.[2] As he warned the magistrates:

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[1] Baxter called himself a "mere Catholic Christian" and his Church polity "primitive Episcopacy." He believed in the equality and independence of pastors, but in his passion for a united Church granted more and more to the established order after the Restoration. In particular, he was willing to accept bishops over pastors.

[2] Jordan writes, "No anti-clerical has ever denounced with more acid and biting strictures the evil of clerical bigotry than Baxter." III, 335.

> Some think there is no settlement of the Church, till they are in the saddle, and all their Brethren are become their servants, and do them obeysance, and alas, we have those that take it for no settlement, till they have the sword in their own hands, or have engaged you to use it at their discretion, and may fill Prisons or other Lands, with their Brethren. . . .[1]

Although he believed that no state establishment of religion left the nation in religious anarchy, he as firmly believed that the peace and unity of the Church in England depended on the denial to the clergy of the use of the magistrate's sword. As Baxter describes the way he first grasped the problem and its cure:

> I first began in Conference and Writing to Reverend Mr. Anthony Burgess, and some others, to put the main Question, whether all Church Government be not, as Camero holdeth, only Perswasive, not by private, but publick or authorized Doctoral Perswasion, and so can work on none but the Conscientious or Assenter. And whether the usurpation of a strictly Legislative and Judicial Power (save only to judge what we are to execute,) or a power of binding Dissenters, even _Clave errante_, especially binding Magistrates to execute by Corporal Penalties and Mulcts, and other Punishment, _Eo nomine_, because by Excommunication the Church hath punished them, I say, whether this be not a robbing the Magistrate of his Power, and making the Exercise of the Keys, to be too like a Coercive Secular Judgment, and so the Ground of all the Quarrels in the Church? For I saw plainly that the Papists, and those Prelates and Presbyterians who are for such an unexamined Judicial Power, do but strive for that which belongeth to none of them all.[2]

The Erastians, he thought, saw this truth most clearly. What he disliked about the Erastians was

> that they made too light of the Power of the Ministry and Church, and of Excommunication; and did not distinguish sufficiently of a perswasive Power which is but private, but is founded only in the Reason of the Speaker, and a per-

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[1] _Five Disputations of Church Government_, Epistle Dedicatory.

[2] _Reliquiae_, II, 146.

> swasive Power which is publick in an Officer of Christ . . . and is founded conjunctly in his Authority (by God's Commission) and his arguments.[1]

In another place Baxter says that Erastus's error ". . . was not his being for the Government of Princes but his taking down the Power of the Keys too much . . . and too much denying Excommunication."[2]

Baxter agreed with the Sectarians that the spiritual jurisdiction could use only spiritual means. They erred, however, in supposing that the magistrate has nothing to do in the Church and religion. For Baxter insisted that Christ governs his Church as much by the civil magistrate as by pastors. Between the office of the pastor and the magistrate ". . . the true differencing terms are fetcht, not from the subject matter, so much from the Mode of Government, one being forcible by the Sword, and the other only on Conscience by the Word doctrinally opened, and personally applied by the Keys."[3]

Thus Baxter was trying to formulate a statement of the two jurisdictions which preserves the integrity of each as he understood them but which also preserves their coordination in the unified whole of the Christian commonwealth. Over against the Papists, Presbyterians, and Sectarians he defended the power of the magistrate. Against the Erastians he defended the power of the pastor, which though it was purely a spiritual power, was nevertheless real. As Baxter states his position against the extremes: "Between the Erastians who would have no government, but by magistrates, and the Papists, who give the magistrate's power to the pope and his prelates, the truth is in the middle."[1]

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[1] *Reliquiae*, II, 141. [2] *Of National Churches*, p. 5.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 6.

Baxter categorically rejected the claim of a thorough Erastian like Hobbes that the minister's authority is given him by the magistrate and that he may teach only what the magistrate authorizes. The minister's authority is immediately from God, and he is to bind men to God's will, and to the magistrate's only under God. To make the minister's authority dependent upon the magistrate is to rob him of his office. "It is God hath Instituted both the Offices, and therefore neither of them can change his Institutions, nor wrong the office of each other, by any depravation."[2]

Part of the office of ministers is to teach men their duties as God had made them known in the Bible. Magistrates may not only not take this from them, they are obliged by God to take ministers as their teachers and to heed them as God's ambassadors. The office of the minister also includes the power of the keys to discipline and ultimately to excommunicate. The magistrate must subject himself to this discipline and therefore is subject to excommunication. Church and ministry were thus to Baxter as to Augustine and Calvin "the divinely inspired organ of spiritual life in human society, having reciprocal relations with the rulers of this world but acting in complete independence of their authority. . . . The church in its obedience instituted both rulers and subjects in theirs."[1] In a sermon to the magistrates of Worcestershire, Baxter summarized his view of the authority of ministers over magistrates:

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[1] CD, VI, 61. [2] HC, p. 292. Cf. CD, V, 115ff.

> Ministers are as truly the magistrates teachers, as magistrates are their governors, yea, by as high and undoubted authority must they oversee, govern, and command ministerially, as their Lord's ambassadors, both kings and parliaments to do whatsoever is written in this Bible, as you may command them to obey the laws of the land; yea, and as strict a bond lieth on you to obey them as far as they speak according to this word, and keep within the bounds of their calling, as doth on them to obey you in yours. . . . Deal not with them so dissemblingly as to call them your pastors, teachers, overseers, and rulers, (as Scripture bids you,) and yet to learn of them but what you list, or to deny them leave to teach or advise you, further than they receive particular warrant and direction from yourselves.[2]

Having said this, however, Baxter immediately begins to qualify the power of the minister over the magistrate so as not to usurp or pull down the office of the magistrate, as he thought the Papists and some Presbyterians and Prelatists did. He first qualifies the minister's power by making his instruction of the magistrate subject to the magistrate's judgment. As all men must exercise a private judgment about the laws of the magistrate, so the magistrate must exercise his own judgment about the teaching of ministers. The magistrate's office is directly from God, and though he may be instructed by ministers, he must govern by his own judgment of God's law.

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[1] Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, pp. 11-12.

[2] True Christianity, Works, XVII, 408.

It was just at this point that he believed the Papists and Presbyterians erred. That is, they ". . . too much debase the Magistrate by making him their meer Executioner; when he is the judge wherever he is the Executioner, and is to try each Cause at his own Barr before he is obliged to punish any."[1] The magistrate must not punish any man simply because he is excommunicated by the power of the keys. If he does punish, it must be by his law and his judgment, not immediately from the judgment of the Church. Thus he urged magistrates:

> Be awakened then, ye Christian Magistrates to keep your sword in your own hand, and use it for God, according to his Law, discerned by your own understandings (though taught by Ministers) and put an end to the quarrels of Popes, and Prelates and Councils, that are partly contending for your power to be in them. . . .[2]

A critical question was the power and effects of excommunication on the civil rights of persons excommunicated, particularly of magistrates. In the medieval period the Church claimed that the power of the keys extended to excommunicating and deposing princes.[1] One of Hooker's strongest objections to the Puritan concept of the Church was that it made even the King subject to the discipline of the pastor of the Church of which he was a member.[2] Baxter could not surrender the power of the Church to discipline magistrates. But he maintained the independence and integrity of the magistrate's office by limiting the exercise of the keys to purely spiritual effects. To Baxter the power of the keys is a purely spiritual discipline which has no direct effect on civil status. The Church neither gives nor can take away the power of magistrates, the rights of property, etc. Therefore excommunication does not in itself deprive a magistrate of his office or any subject of his property or civil liberties.[3]

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[1] Reliquiae, II, 143. Cf. Ibid., p. 237; HC, pp. 282-83.

[2] HC, p. 283.

By so defining the nature of the spiritual power, Baxter believed that he avoids on the one hand the claim which he believed usurps the magistrate's office and makes the exercise of the keys too much like coercive, secular government and on the other hand the Erastian error of denying any power but the magistrate's. In the final analysis, Baxter's position is a modified Erastianism. Although he tried to defend the integrity of both offices,

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1. See "Deposition of Henry IV by Gregory VII," p. 146.

2. Op. cit., III, 435.

3. Reliquiae, II, 141ff.; HC, p. 295; CD, VI, 60-61.

he granted the magistrate more power over the minister than the minister over the magistrate.

Baxter's greatest contribution to the ultimate resolution of the Church-state controversy was his analysis of the spiritual jurisdiction. In his discussion of the spiritual jurisdiction, John Locke wrote:

> The end of a religious society . . . is the public worship of God, and by means thereof the acquisition of eternal life. All discipline ought therefore to tend to that end, and all ecclesiastical laws to be thereunto confined. Nothing ought, nor can be transacted in this society relating to the possession of civil and worldly good. No force is here to be made use of upon any occasion whatsoever: force belongs wholly to the civil magistrate, and the possession of all outward goods is subject to his jurisdiction. Excommunication neither does nor can deprive the excommunicated person of any of those civil goods that he formerly possessed.[1]

One author cites this quotation and concludes: "that simple formulation summed up the achievements of a century of struggle."[2] Baxter, by forcefully stating the purely spiritual nature and ends of the spiritual jurisdiction, contributed to that formulation and no doubt through his influence persuaded a multitude of other Englishmen to accept it.

The Magistrate's Role in Religion

Julius Jaeger's description of Baxter's understanding of the role of the magistrate in religion as a "comprehensive Erastianism"[1] is more accurate than W. K. Jordan's statement that "Baxter saw far more clearly than his colleagues that Erastianism was a two-edged sword"[2] and that he granted "almost grudgingly, that the civil power is vested with certain responsibilities" in the maintenance and defense of religion and the church.[3] For Baxter did more than "grudgingly" grant a role for magistrates in religion. He believed that princes like Theodosius and Constantine had done more to promote the Christian Church than bishops and councils.[4] During the Interregnum period he wrote impassioned pleas to Richard to ignore those who tell the world that magistrates have nothing to do with religion and to exercise his power for its benefit. Even after the Restoration, when he was at odds with the Supreme Power, he believed that only that Power could bring unity to the Church and became more, not less, Erastian.[5]

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[1] Letter Concerning Toleration, Cited in Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, p. 380.

[2] Ibid.

The reasons which Baxter gave for granting the magistrate such a role can be reduced to four arguments. The first of these is a philosophical argument from the relationship of the end of man to the end of the state. Briefly stated, this argument is that since the ultimate end of man is enjoyment of God in eternity, all else, including political government, must be subordinate to

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1. _Op_. _cit_., p. 162. 2. _Jordan_, III, 335. 3. _Ibid_., p. 334. 4. _Of_ _National_ _Churches_, pp. 5, 40. 5. See above, pp. 72ff.

and serve this end. Since the magistrate most effectively contributes to man's attainment of his ultimate end when he directly concerns himself with man's religious helps, he has a right and duty to promote the Church, ministry, and true doctrine, and to suppress intolerable heresy.

If men enter into society in order to live the good life, then the securing of religion, which most contributes to the good life and the end of man, must be part of that which the government is to secure. "Even Aristotle," Baxter wrote, "could say . . . that each man's active and contemplative life, is the end of government and not only the public peace; and that is the best life which conduceth most to our consideration of God and that is the worst, which calleth us off from considering and worshipping him."[1] Therefore Baxter told Charles II that the people whom he represented looked on the sovereign as the officer of God "to defend them in the possession of their helps of their salvation,"[2] and he exhorted magistrates in general:

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[1] *CD*, VI, 13, footnote e. It is interesting to note that Hooker used an almost identical argument: "For of every politic society that being true which Aristotle hath, namely 'that the scope thereof is not simply to live, nor the duty so much to provide for life, as for means of living well:' and that the soul is the worthier part of man, so human societies are much more to care for that which tendeth properly unto the soul's estate." *Op. cit.*, III, 332.

[2] *Reliquiae*, II, 230.

> Let none persuade you that you are such terrestrial animals that have nothing to do with the heavenly concernments of your subjects. . . . There is no such thing as a temporal happiness to any people, but what tendeth to the happiness of their souls; and must thereby be measured, and thence be estimated. Though ministers are more immediately employed about the soul, yet your office is ultimately for the happiness of souls, as well as theirs; though bodily things (rewards or punishments) are the means, by which you may promote it; which ministers, as such, may not meddle with. Therefore you are *custodes utriusque tabulae*, and must bend the force of all your government to the saving of people's souls.[1]

To fulfill its true end, then, the political association must intend the spiritual as well as the temporal good of its members. Consequently, "The order of a Civil body, consisting of Governors and Subjects intended for their corporal Wel-fare, but acknowledging not Gods Soveraignty, nor intending Spiritual and everlasting good, nor the pleasing or honour of God" is a commonwealth only "analogically," for it is no more a proper commonwealth than "an Ideot is a reasonable man."[2]

The second argument is a biblical argument, which would be very persuasive to the Scripturally-oriented Puritans.[3] To say that the magistrate has nothing to do with religion "contradicteth the express revelation of the will of God, in the holy Scriptures."[4] Moses and the Kings of Israel had an active role in religion.

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[1] *CD*, VI, 14-15. [2] *HC*, pp. 59-60.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 61ff. and An Addition to the Preface.

[4] *Ibid*., An Addition to the Preface.

Both the tablets of the law were parts of the political law of the Jews, that is, their political covenant contained both religious and social duties. Therefore to deny the magistrate a role in religion is to go against the example of the holy theocracy of Israel, which was established by God's direct ordination. This is to set aside the Old Testament.[1]

Baxter's third argument attacks the Sectarian ideal of religious liberty, which denied the magistrate a role in religion. First of all, Baxter used his often repeated claim that unlimited toleration would bring the reestablishment of Popery, given conditions in Seventeenth Century England. Not only would the Papists persuade some with their doctrines, many more would turn to Popery out of disgust and despair with the disintegration of the English Church. Once in the majority and in power, the Papists, far from permitting liberty of religion, would impose their religion by fire and sword. Therefore unlimited freedom in religion would be subversive both of Church and state in England.[2]

Baxter believed that the most telling argument against unlimited religious liberty is that it is contrary to the government of Christ, which all Puritans claimed was what they sought: "Satans Liberty to deceive, is not the Churches Liberty, nor purchased by Christ for us, but is a heavy judgment." As Baxter elaborates this:

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[1] Baxter and the Sectarians differed in their biblical hermeneutics. The Sectarians more sharply separated the Testaments and exalted the New Testament. Conservative Puritans like Baxter more directly appropriated the Old Testament as a norm for Christian faith and practice.

[2] See above, pp. 73-74.

> But this is my argument: If the Legislation and judgment by Christ among us be the End that our Government should aim at, then the Liberty in all matters of Worship, and of Faith, is not the Good Cause, for this is against, and most inconsistent with this government of Christ. I appeal to Reason, whether to give men liberty to preach down Christ as a deceiver, to preach up Mahomet, to worship the Sun or Moon, to deny the Resurrection, or perswade men that there is no life but this, or Heaven or Hell, and all actual worship of God, etc., I say, whether liberty for these (yea or the Masse alone) be liker to the Government of Jesus Christ, or conducing to it then is the restraint of all this infidelity and impiety? Doth Christ rule more when all we have leave to spit at his name. . .? This will be believed but by few that consider it. . . . this Liberty signifieth the Reign of Satan and not of Christ; and that is the loosing of the Dragon, and not the liberty of Saints.[1]

It is therefore most consistent with Christ's government and the good of the commonwealth to restrain such teachings. As a family would be ruined if men were allowed to tempt the sons and daughters to theft and drunkenness, so the life of the commonwealth and the Church will be corrupted if men are allowed to seduce its citizens with corrupt doctrines. Ministers in the Church are to judge and condemn heresy and false worship and excommunicate those that persist in them, but ministers can not restrain men in society at large. For it belongs to the magistrate alone

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1. HC, An Addition to the Preface.

to use coercive restraint. Therefore Christ's government, which requires the restraint of deadly error, requires the aid which only the magistrate can give. Moreover, the magistrate's power is given him by God, and it is inconceivable that his power should be used only against the crimes of theft, etc., when blasphemy, etc., are far more heinous sins.

The fourth argument is directed to the magistrate himself. If the people regard the magistrate as an officer of Christ to secure them in the helps of their salvation, they will obey him as such. "If," Baxter warned, "Magistrates be once taken to be such terrestriall Creatures, as that their business is only about these vile corporell things, their office will be esteemed of, no better than the object of it, or the work in which they are employed".[1] To teach that the magistrate is instituted only for corporal good is to elevate the minister above him "more than a Prince in worldly splendor is above a slave."[2] If the magistrate is not to be abased below the spiritual jurisdiction, as Papists do, he must claim his true status as an officer of Christ for spiritual, as well as corporal good.

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1. HC, An Addition to the Preface.

2. Ibid. In the section on the office of a magistrate in A Christian Directory (CD,VI, 13ff.), written after the Restoration, Baxter uses this argument and the argument from the end of man but not the Scriptural argument or the attack on religious liberty. In An Addition to the Preface in HC he does not use the argument from the end of man. This can be explained by the difference in those in power, Army Puritans being replaced by Royalist Anglicans.

Baxter's view of the relationship between the political and religious covenants and the two communities which these covenants formed distinguishes his theory of Church and state from Hobbes and Hooker on one hand and the Sectarians on the other. The Sectarians sharply distinguished the two covenants and the communities which they formed: The Church covenant is for purely spiritual ends; the political covenant is for purely temporal ends; the membership of the socities are quite distinct and unrelated. Hobbes and Hooker, however, used "Church" to signify the spiritual aspect of the one Christian commonwealth. Baxter stood between these two extremes. He stood with the Sectarians in agreeing that there are two covenants. Indeed, before the Restoration he would not admit that Hobbes's and Hooker's use of Church is strictly proper. He limited the proper use of "Church" to designate a particular congregation or the universal Church. When he accepted late in life the idea of a national Church of which the King is the chief ecclesiastical officer, this was part of his further movement toward Erastianism. Baxter differed from the Sectarians in the direction of Hobbes and Hooker, however, in believing that the magistrate has an oversight of religious concerns and that the membership of the two societies should be as identical as possible. In effect, he stood within that part of the Calvinistic tradition which began with the oneness of the Christian commonwealth and exalted the role of the magistrate.

The content of the role that Baxter assigns to the magistrate in religion can be summarized in three points.[1] The first is his duty to be custodian of both tables of the law. As such he must punish blasphemy, idolatry, etc., sins of the first table, as well as theft, adultery, etc., which are sins of the second table. Second, he has general oversight of the external or circumstantial aspects of the Church. By this Baxter means the distribution of the tithes, the Church's property, etc. Third, the magistrate has a general oversight of the Church. Magistrates are "guardians" of the Church, and as such, "Magistrates must not only govern Ministers as men, but as Ministers, nor Christians only as men, but as Christians, and as Churches; not only in secular affairs but in the matter of Gods Worship."[2] As the "first member" of the Church the magistrate is to promote true religion and the unity and holiness of the Church. This requires activities ranging from the suppression of error and heresy, to calling synods and councils, to encouraging and supporting godly ministers.

The nature of these responsibilities can be most easily examined by looking at Baxter's answer to four questions which were much debated in the Seventeenth Century; the meaning of the oath of supremacy that the King is the supreme governor in causes ecclesiastical as well as civil; the power of the magistrate over pastors; whether the magistrate is a judge in controversies of faith and worship; and how the magistrate can best promote unity and holiness.

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[1] See especially HC, pp. 300ff.; CD, VI, 13ff., 53ff.

[2] HC, p. 300.

Baxter had no scruple about subscribing to the supremacy of the king in causes ecclesiastical. He begins by observing that the title was used to overturn the Papal usurpation of the magistrate's office. Its meaning, he explained, is "that in all causes ecclesiastical, so far as coercive government is required, it belongeth not to pope or prelates under him; but to the king and his officers or courts alone."[1] It should not be taken to mean that ministers are robbed of their true spiritual jurisdiction. "It is but to say that there may be need of the use both of the word and the sword against the same persons, for the same offence."[2] As the minister alone can discipline with excommunication, so the magistrate alone can discipline with the sword. It is this supremacy in coercive government that is meant by the king's supremacy.

To explain his position more fully, Baxter discussed what is to be done should the minister and magistrate differ in their commands.[3] The first presupposition, of course, is that God is

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1. CD, VI, 55. 2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., pp. 56-57; HC, pp. 301ff., 356.

to be obeyed above either minister or magistrate. Should either command anything contrary to the law of God, he is not to be obeyed. But if the matter is a question left undetermined by God, each is to be obeyed in his proper office. In such questions as what translation of the Bible is to be used in Church, who is a Church member, who is to receive the sacraments, etc., the minister is to be obeyed above the magistrate because these matters immediately pertain to his office. In matters directly pertaining to the magistrate's office and in doubtful cases, the magistrate is to be obeyed. The "circumstantials" of worship, which extend to such things as the utensils and place of worship, the parish limits, the gestures of worship, etc., are included here. Thus the work of magistrates extends to this extent even to the ordering of the worship of God.

The question of whether the magistrate is a judge in controversies of faith and worship was to Baxter an "easy" question.[1] The minister must make his judgment about spiritual discipline. The magistrate must make his judgment about the exercise of the sword. "About faith or worship, if the question be, 'Who shall be protected as orthodox, and who shall be punished by the sword as heretical, idolatrous, or irreligious;' here the magistrate is the only judge."[2] Magistrates must therefore judge of questions of faith and worship as well as of ministers. The difference lies in the means of discipline which they can use, not in sharp separation of the subjects with which they concern themselves. This is what Baxter means when he says that the differences in the two offices "are fetched not from the subject matter, so much as from the Mode of Government, one being forcible by the Sword, and the other only on Conscience by the Word, doctrinally opened, and personally applied by the Keys."[1]

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[1] CD, VI, 53.

[2] Ibid. Cf. ibid., V, 313-14; HC, pp. 293-94.

There can be no doubt that magistrates have power over ministers. They must judge which of them are to be approved, tolerated, or suppressed and may remove approved ministers for mal-administration. Baxter does not hesitate to maintain that "the magistrate hath power over their very pastoral work, though he have not power in it, so as to do it himself."[2] In this sense, Baxter grants the magistrate more power over ministers than he grants ministers over magistrates. For magistrates may remove ministers from office, but ministers may not remove magistrates.

Baxter accused the Papists of robbing the magistrate of his due power and appropriating the name of Church to the clergy alone.[1] He, however, made the magistrate the first citizen or member and guardian of the Church as well as of the commonwealth. He so exalted the office of magistrate that he taught that though pastors or priests are more immediately concerned with spiritual questions, yet Christ governs his Church "as much and more eminently by Princes as by Priests or Pastors."[2] Thus, though Baxter does not go as far as a thorough Erastian like Hobbes, he did grant the magistrate very great power in the Church.

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[1] Of National Churches, p. 6. Jordan is therefore quite mistaken in saying that according to Baxter "the State enjoys no power in the definition or punishment of error since it is invested with neither competency nor jurisdiction in this matter." Jordan, III, 335.

[2] CD, VI, 55. Cf. Of National Churches, p. 13; HC, pp. 285ff.; 301 ff.

Such a position may seem odd for a representative of a tradition which relatively emphasized the independence of the two jurisdictions. Not all in this tradition emphasized their independence with equal force, however. Baxter belonged to the group within the Calvinistic tradition which tended to start from the oneness of the Christian commonwealth rather than the duality of Church and state. Moreover, as J. N. Figgis suggests, all the "magisterial Protestants,"

> . . . however high they might desire in practice to place the persuasive function of the hierarchy, whether Prelatic or Presbyterian, all regarded the lay power in a much higher light than had the medieval ecclesiastical theory. England especially was dominated by the notion of Church and State, as different aspects or departments in one society, and the authoritative position of the civil magistrate was

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[1] *Of National Churches*, p. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

> proclaimed against Papist and Brownist alike in the Ecclesiastical Polity of Richard Hooker.[1]

And, it may be added, in the writings of Richard Baxter.

Baxter and other magisterial Protestants could grant so much power to the magistrate because they were thinking in terms of the godly Prince. The magistrate must make his own judgment about what is heresy, etc., but his judgment is of course to be but his discernment of what is the will of God. The premise which is always present is that the task of the magistrate in regard to the Christian faith is to preserve it and to further obedience to it, not to alter it.[2] Baxter was simply saying that this was as much the duty of magistrates as of ministers. If magistrates can err, so can ministers. There is no escape from this problem into an infallible ministry or priesthood which binds all, including magistrates, to its judgment. All are equally responsible to Christ. "As the prime and sole universal legislation belongeth to Jesus Christ, so the final judgment, universal and particular, belongeth to him, which only will end all controversies and from which there is no appeal."[3]

Such broad powers could be granted to the godly Prince also because though not all controversies can be settled, the fundamentals of the Christian faith are clear and evident and are not a matter of subjective uncertainty. Here is the foundation on which the magistrate can do his work in religion. Here is the starting point in answering the question of how the magistrate can best promote unity and holiness.

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[1] The Divine Right of Kings, p. 286.

[2] HC, p. 309.

[3] CD, V, 314.

As W. K. Jordan suggests, Baxter's concept of the role of the magistrate in the Church was finally shaped by his concept of a comprehensive and concordant Church. This concept led him to moderate the theocratic position. As Jordan describes this moderation:

> The moderate position on the vital question of the role of the Christian magistrate in the Church, while soundly Calvinistic, was expressed in moderate overtones which make it stand in the sharpest contrast to orthodox theory. The Christian ruler must labour with the Church toward the unity which we are commanded to attain. But the emphasis of the moderate argument was upon unity rather than upon the penalties which should be employed against those who should wilfully break this unity of faith. The liberalism of the moderate Presbyterian position, therefore, may be said to reside in the conception of the Church which was carefully advanced to heal the fissure in English Calvinism.[1]

The most important work that the magistrate is to do in religion, then, is to promote a comprehensive, concordant, and holy Church which will serve as the foundation for the building of a holy commonwealth. The problem was how to accomplish this given the divided, disorganized, and even chaotic state of the English Church after the Revolution. Moreover, how could reformation and unity be reconciled with civil liberty?

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[1] III, 321.

Baxter recognized that coercion was not the answer. Not only would it deny liberty, but in practice unity could not be thus attained. The failure of Laudian Prelacy and Presbyterian discipline alike had convinced him that men could not be driven in religion. He agreed that dangerous and intolerable error must be restrained, but though force could restrain the open propagation of error, it could not make men believe or love each other. Moreover, to force men into the Church would corrupt the Church.

The solution is for the magistrate to seek the middle ground between those that "are too much against Liberty" and those that are "too much for it." For thereby the magistrate avoids "the extremes of uncharitable rigor, presumptious impositions, and licentious toleration of Church destroyers."[1]

Magistrates may compel men to walk orderly and quietly in their lives and to submit to teaching but they cannot force them to believe. Since they cannot, they should use the means which most readily produce faith. In this, love and patience are better than coercion. As he summarized:

> To persecute men, and then call them to charity, is like whipping children to make them give over crying. . . I saw that he that will be loved, must love; and he that chooseth to be more feared than loved, must expect to be hated, or loved but diminutively: and he that will have

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[1] "A Letter to Sir Edward Harley," p. 60. Cf. Reliquiae, II, 142-43; The English Nonconformity, pp. 271 ff.

> Children, must be a Father: and he that will be a Tyrant must be contented with Slaves.[1]

The coerced obedience of slaves is not the obedience of the Saints.

The only things which should be required as necessary are the fundamentals of Christianity, which are found in the Apostles' Creed, the Decalogue, and the Lord's Prayer.[2] The imposition of more, especially of oaths, has been the great source of division in the Church. Only severe errors are to be repressed, and even here cruelty, torture, and death are never to be employed. Nor is it "the believing of untruths that must be restrained (would that could be done!) nor yet the professing what a man believeth when he is commanded or called to it: but it is the seducing of others by the teaching of those untruths."[3]

Thus though Baxter rejected the belief that no coercion was to be used in religion, he as certainly rejected the horrors of the Inquisition and considerably reduced the effectiveness of the imprisonment and fines which he allowed could be used. Baxter like many others was from experience becoming "sensible of the Sin and Mischief of using Men cruelly in Matters of Religion, and of pretending Mens good, and the Order of the Church, for Acts of Unhumanity or Uncharitableness."[4] He came finally to the conclusion that Cromwell's policy of toleration, which he had opposed at the time, was in the main correct.[1] Thus though Baxter became increasingly Erastian, he also became increasingly tolerant.

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[1] Reliquiae, I, 14.

[2] Ibid., I, 126, 130-32; II, 198; CD, VI, 16.

[3] "A Letter to Sir Edward Harley," p. 49.

[4] Reliquiae, I, 130-33.

His emphasis, as Jordan suggests, was increasingly "upon unity rather than upon the penalties which would be employed against those who should wilfully break this unity of faith."[2] The primary role of the magistrate thus was not in the employment of coercion but in the positive encouragement of unity and holiness in the Church. The use of coercion in religion at best can only help prevent the spread of heresy. In practice its abuse can corrupt the Church and destroy liberty. In any case it can not create a holy and concordant Church. Only love and persuasion can do that. It is but a step from such a position to the abandonment altogether of coercion in matters of faith. Baxter did not take that step himself, but he did moderate the theocratic tradition and help prepare the way for its later representatives to take it.

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1. Reliquiae, I, 87. 2. III, 335.

CHAPTER VI

A HOLY COMMONWEALTH AND THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STATE

John Calvin warned that "obviously it would be an idle pastime for men in private life, who are disqualified from deliberating on the organization of any commonwealth, to dispute over what would be the best kind of government in that place where they live."[1] Yet he did not hesitate to state that "aristocracy, or a system compounded of aristocracy and democracy, far excels all others," because "men's fault or failing causes it to be safer and more bearable for a number to exercise government."[2] The question of the best form of government was a live and immediate question in Seventeenth Century England. It was therefore a question to which Baxter gave careful and detailed attention.

The Way to a Holy Commonwealth

With Calvin, Baxter recognized that it is difficult to achieve a good form of government. The root of the problem is selfishness and pride, which have been breaking order since Adam.

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[1] _Op_. _cit_., II, 1493. [2] _Ibid_.

> The sin that broak Order, is still at work to widen the breach. He that is a subject, would fain be in Authority . . . and he that is in Soveraign Power with just limitations, doth hate restraint, and take it for imprisonment or subjection; and striveth till he hath broak all bonds, and hath no guide but his own understanding, and nothing to moderate his impotent will.[1]

As Baxter saw it, the problem of achieving a good form of government is "how to restrain the Prince from Tyrannie without disabling him from necessary Government."[2]

In discussing "the diverse sorts" and "the best forme of Government and the happyest Commonwealth," the issue is ordinarily understood to be who is to have sovereignty, Baxter wrote, but he believed that the nature of the power which the sovereign would have and the ends for which it would be used were as great issues. For in determining the best form of government, the proper end and power of government are issues prior to the question of the number and quality of those who should exercise sovereignty. Therefore he discussed the question of the best form of government in both these senses.[3]

Baxter recognized the common classification of the pure forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The difference between these forms is the difference in those who are sovereign: one, the few best, or the majority vote of all. But though the forms differ in the persons who are sovereign, in each form sovereignty is used for the common good. The perversion of these forms he called tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocratie. In each of these the power of government is exercised for private, partial interest rather than for the common good. In addition to the pure forms, he recognized a fourth form of government, the mixed government, which has elements drawn from all the pure forms.

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[1] HC, p. 201.

[2] Ibid., p. 202.

[3] Ibid.,pp. 76ff., 208ff.

Baxter regarded monarchy as ordinarily the best of the pure forms because it best promotes unity and imitates nature. But he rejected the theory that monarchy is divinely ordained. God has left the form of government of each state to be determined by men. For the situations and conditions of peoples vary greatly, habits and customs particularly, and the form of government must vary to fit these varying conditions. Thus, though democracy is generally the worst form of government, because most liable to corruption, it is best for some peoples because fitted to their customs and temperaments. Baxter does not discuss pure aristocracy, but his ideal for England is in effect a mixed government with pronounced aristocratic elements.

Although Baxter praised monarchy, Schlatter errs in saying that he did not object to Hobbes's absolutism.[1] He objected vehemently, and his objections are very similar to Calvin's. First, rulers are not to be trusted with unlimited powers. "The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked; and what will it do, if it may do what it will?"[1] "And experience hath told the world, that there is many, and very many bad Kings for one good one throughout the world; and the wicked will do wickedly when they have no restraint."[2] Therefore Hobbes's theory "that if they are absolute, their Interest will lead them to cherish their people" is not to be heeded.[3] "Kingdoms and common Felicity are not all to be ventured upon the secret and unknown good meanings and good wills of Kings."[4]

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[1] RB and Puritan Politics, p. 25.

Second, an unlimited, absolute human sovereign is an usurpation of God's sovereignty. God has limited all human government by making it subservient to his law and to the ends for which he instituted government. Therefore to claim or to exercise an unlimited absolute government is not only tyranny against man but rebellion against God.[5] It is for these reasons "that in the

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[1] HC, p. 204. [2] Ibid., p. 205.

[3] Ibid., p. 204. Baxter elsewhere cites several historical examples to prove that "the world hath not wanted men who think the lives of many thousands a little sacrifice to a proud design or furious passion." Reasons of the Christian Religion, Works, XX, 504.

[4] HC, p. 423.

[5] HC, pp. 106, 204ff.; CD, VI, 274. Baxter did not grant even the master of a slave unlimited power over his slave. Much less would he grant unlimited power to a governor over his subjects. CD, IV, 212ff.

Constitution, they have provided, that the publicke peace and felicity shall be held by reasonable security, and not by meer trust in the Princes Will: and that Parliaments are appointed to that end."[1]

If one extreme of bad polity is that of "atheistical flatterers" of monarchy who would set up "a leviathan," the other extreme of bad polity is that of those who have an excessive zeal for popular government.[2]

Baxter regarded democracy as ordinarily the worst form of government because it was most easily corrupted. As he defined democracy and its corruption:

> Democracy is a Common-wealth where the Soveraign Power is in all, or the Major Vote of the People to be exercised for the Common-good. . . . The Corruption of this is called Ochlocratie, which is the confusion of the Community, when the Rabble rout or multitude have the Rule, which they exercise to satisfie their giddy humors, or some private Interest against the Common-well-fare; Scarce any Democracy escapes this.[3]

Why, then, did Baxter think that democracy is so easily corrupted and therefore is ordinarily the worst form of government?

Baxter's arguments against democracy can be divided into two groups.[4] In one group are the disadvantages that follow when sovereignty is in the hands of all rather than a few in behalf of

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1. HC, p. 426. 2. CD, VI, 71. 3. HC, p. 87.

4. Schlatter discusses some of Baxter's arguments against democracy, particularly the anthropological ones, in RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 23-33.

all. Democracy causes a confusion by making the governors and those governed one. It makes the impartiality necessary to good government difficult. Faction, partiality, and confusion are more likely the products of democracy than good government. Of all the forms of government it is farthest from the natural order of subjection which is everywhere evident in nature. Because of the number of people involved in decision making, a democracy is slow, cumbersome, and most easily paralyzed by dissension. It is particularly at a great disadvantage in time of war and crisis. Democracies also have the greatest capacity for evil, for it is more difficult to restrain or correct the errors of a democracy than other forms of government. Thus Baxter recognized that the tyranny of the majority was as real a danger as license and anarchy. As he himself described the dangers from the experience of past attempted democracies: "and so when all governed, they found that none governed; but Tyrannie and all Vice did raign in popular confusions; and there was neither peace nor safety to the whole or parts."[1]

The second group of arguments are anthropological. Most men are unfit to rule. Therefore, to make them rulers, as democracy does, is to have poor government. Rulers should be wise, good, and have opportunity to inform themselves of public issues. The majority of men in England in his time, Baxter argues, possessed none of these qualities. He points out that in some places not more than one out of five or ten could read. For this and other reasons, the great majority lacked adequate breadth of understanding to grasp the complexities of public issues. "The multitude of the people are usually of lamentable understandings, utterly unfit for such worthy things."[1] "Multitudes in England, and more in Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, the High-lands, are scarce able to reason about common things! And are these fit to have the Soveraign Power to Rule the Common-wealth?"[2] Baxter cites as an example the most democratic of institutions, the jury:

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[1] HC, p. 203. Baxter cites the testimony of Cicero, Seneca, Polybius, etc., against democracies. Ibid., pp. 107ff.

> I have been very sensible of this at an Assize, when I have heard the Judge and Counsellers industriously opening the case to the Jury, who stood by them as innocently as if they had heard nothing but Hebrew or Arabick all the while, and go their way, and bring in their Verdict, either as some one cunninger then the rest, perswades them, or else at random or Haphazard, speaking that which was next the tongues end, so that I thought it much at one, as to throw the dice upon it, who should have the day. But O! if our people came to the work of Law-making . . . what work should we have? And what a Herd would Govern us.[3]

The multitude are not only ignorant, they are also sensual, "yea, Enemies to the very principal ends of Government, in most places of the world: therefore they are utterly unfit for Soveraignty."[4] Baxter had experienced the fury of the "Rabble" during the chaos of the civil war, and he had a very great fear of them: "Were not this multitude restrained they would presently have the blood of the godly. Late experience hath told us somewhat. Their hatred of piety is so wonderfull and unreasonable, that I confess it confirms me in my belief of the Word of God, that doth affirm it of them."[1] Since such was the quality of the multitude: "I conclude therefore that this ignorant, impious, mutable, cruel, violent rout, shall never have my consent for the Soveraignty."[2]

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[1] HC, p. 90.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 91.

[4] Ibid., p. 92.

It should be carefully noted that all Baxter's arguments to this point are addressed to pure democracy, that is, where every man votes on every question or where men serve in office through rotation. To those who would call a government by officers a democracy and its people sovereign because the officers are elected by universal suffrage, Baxter replied that to elect officers is not to govern and therefore not to hold the sovereignty.[3] An elected representative government is not a pure democracy. No one was, of course, proposing a pure democracy for England. Harrington had proposed a republic based upon a complicated system of rotated and elected officers. The Levellers proposed universal manhood suffrage. But Baxter objected to these modified democratic ideas as well as to a pure democracy. In particular, he opposed universal suffrage.

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[1] HC, p. 93. [2] Ibid., pp. 91-92. [3] Ibid.

What was needed in England, he insisted, was a succession of wise and good men in office. But universal suffrage in England would not accomplish this because the majority were not wise and good enough to elect such rulers. The elections would rather be controlled by the wealthy lords through their control of their tenants. ". . . let Parliaments be chosen by unrestrained Votes, and that party that hath most tenants, and that is most against Puritanes will carry it."[1] Universal suffrage was not the answer to England's problem. What then was his proposal for the best form of government for England?

Baxter believed that "many models have been devised, and most of them have their excellencies, and defects" and that "he that could cull out the best of every mode, and leave the worst, would shew his Wisdom."[2] A mixed government is therefore the best form. "And yet," he concludes, "I must say for ought I see, the Government of this Common-wealth is already balanced with as much prudence, caution, and equality, (though with less ado) as the curiousest of the Models that self-conceited men would obtrude with so much ostentation."[3]

Harrington proposed a radically new constitution as the cure for England's problems. Baxter thought the overturning of the traditional mixed English constitution with its King, Lords, and Commons a principal source of the evils that had befallen England. Thus he opposed those whom he regarded as its overturners, Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, the Army radicals, and James II, and supported those whom he hoped would restore it, Richard Cromwell, Charles II, and William and Mary.[1] What England needed, he thought, was not a new constitution but a more effective realization of the theocratic ideal.

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[1] HC, p. 237. Cf. "A Letter to John Swinfen," p. 63.

[2] HC, pp. 206-07.

[3] Ibid., p. 207.

"This is a Theocracy," Baxter explained,"when Princes govern From God, By God, and For God, in all things."[2] What does this imply for human sovereignty and law? In a theocracy, all human sovereignty and law is recognized as subordinate to God's sovereignty and law. The sovereign is to take care to:

> 1. doe all in a due subordination to God the fountaine of authority; 2. That he frame all his Laws and execution so as that they may be a means to the ends of Government: *viz* both the neerest end, the Order, peace, and happinesse, Corporall, and Spirituall of the Common-wealth; and the ultimate end, the Pleasing of God in our salvation for ever.[3]

In relation to the ends for which the power of government is used, the application of the theocratic ideal means to value spiritual and moral above corporal good. The primary responsibility of government is to make men good and virtuous, not rich and prosperous.

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[1] *RB and Puritan Politics*, p. 26. [2] *HC*, p. 216.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 111.

"Virtue is better than wealth, and Vice worse than Poverty."[1]

The question of the best form of government is the question of which form of government best achieves the ends of government. Since Baxter believed that men's spiritual and moral good is the greater part of the common good, he argued:

> That is the best form of Government to this or that People, that all things considered, doth most powerfully tend to their spiritual and everlasting welfare, and their Holiness, Obedience, and pleasing of God. Nothing is more sure or clear, then that the ultimate end doth most put the due estimate on all the means. If Government be no means to this end, it is not good, desirable, nor of God; for if it be not to and for God, it is not from him. There is nothing in all the world that can be the Object of a humane Act, but the ultimate end, and the means thereto. If Government be neither, we have nothing to do with it: But if it be one (as certainly it is) it cannot be the end, and therefore must be a means; and if so, that is the best means which most tendeth to the attainment of the end.[2]

Therefore the best form of government is a "Divine Commonwealth" where "the Honour and Pleasing of God, and the salvation of the people are the Principal Ends, and their corporal welfare but subordinate to these."[3]

Given this understanding of the ends of political government, it also follows that the concerns of the state and Church are basically the same, though "the form and administration of them are different."[4] A close relationship between Church and state is therefore another consequence of Baxter's understanding of the theocratic ideal. The two coordinate but distinct powers are to assist one another, and membership of Church and state are to be as nearly identical as is possible. Those who are not Church members "are to be subjects on a lower order who are yet to have protection of the laws for their lives and possessions."[1] "And if they be Impious or Infidels, (unless by particular crimes they incur any penalty) I urge not the Magistrate now to deprive them of their Estates or personal Liberties: But let them have nothing to do with Governing us."[2] Thus though even atheists and infidels have natural rights and liberties, full citizenship is to be restricted to those who are committed to the ideals of wisdom, goodness, and godliness.

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[1] HC, p. 177.

[2] Ibid., p. 79.

[3] Ibid. p.212.

[4] Ibid., p.216.

Baxter believed that the realization of the theocratic ideal depended more upon the realization of this doctrine of citizenship than upon anything else, including the question of the division of sovereignty. For the central problem in politics is the problem of the quality of governors. Or as Baxter put it, the central problem in politics is how to secure a succession of good and wise men in office. His proposal was to regulate the election of governors. As he put his proposal in 1659:

> . . . could a Prudent course be taken now, for the Regulating of future elections, we should have a moral security

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[1] HC, p. 219.

[2] Ibid., p. 250. Cf. Of National Churches, p. 25.

> of good Parliaments to all Generations, who would make good Laws, and see to the execution, and be under God, the summ of Blessings for the Common-good; we should have Parliaments of the wisest and most pious men; and such are least for private Interest, but would devote themselves to God and to their Countrey.[1]

"We should then build all the Fabrick of our Government on a Rock, that else will have a foundation of Sand."[2] "That a succession of wise and godly men may be secured to the Nation in the Highest Power," is the central concern discussed in A Holy Commonwealth.[3] The regulation of elections to secure this aim was also the burden of Baxter's counsel to his friends in Parliament.[4]

As for the King, he should either be selected on the basis of his wisdom and goodness from the four or five wisest and best men of the land, or if the crown be hereditary, the princes should

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1. HC, p. 245. As Baxter explains, wisdom, goodness, and power must be conjunct because each is needed: "Wisdom to govern, goodness to aim at the due end (the Common Good), and power to execute. . . ." "A Letter to John Swinfen," p. 62.

2. HC, p. 208.

3. He wrote to the Army radicals: "And so if Honesty and Godlinesse be the things you aim at, you will find my Principles suited to your ends: and as I like not the Democratick formes, so am I not fond of any other, above the rest. That a succession of wise and godly men may be secured to the Nation in the Highest Power is that which I have directed you to in this Book. . . ." HC, Preface.

4. "A Letter to John Swinfen," pp. 61ff., and "A Letter to Thomas Bampfield," pp. 140ff. Cf. HC, pp. 207ff., 247ff. To effect the regulation of elections, Baxter proposed officers appointed by the state to determine the matter. To be eligible for election a man would ordinarily be required to be a member in good standing in a Church. But in order to avoid giving ministers the power to exclude anyone automatically from office by excommunicating him, the final decision was to be made by these electoral officers.

be very carefully educated, both in politics and divinity. Even with these precautions, "because of the imperfections of all princes," it would be necessary to have a vigilant Parliament, to regulate his office by a constitution, and to keep a well armed militia.[1]

In short, Baxter wanted the traditional English constitution of King, Lords, and Commons with the electoral base for the House of Commons reformed to favor the godly, sober, "middle sort" of men whom he trusted more than either the dissolute gentry or the ignorant, impious multitude.[2]

Schlatter calls this ideal "a defense of the dictatorship of the praying classes."[3] Baxter's ideal was, to be sure, government by the praying classes, but although this government would be elitist and authoritarian in comparison with the ideals of liberal democracy, it should not be called a dictatorship. Schlatter himself recognizes that "Baxter's friends did not like arbitrary government; they wanted limited government, resting on a bottom of civilian consent, which they could control" and that "Baxter held firmly to the Protestant principle that agreement must be the voluntary act of men who understand what they are doing. . . ."[4] Such ideas are inconsistent with a dictatorship.

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[1] HC, pp. 262ff.; "A Letter to John Swinfen," pp. 63ff.

[2] RB and Puritan Politics, p. 31.

[3] Ibid., p. 4.

[4] Ibid., p. 45.

Baxter very carefully guarded against taking his belief that the wise and good should rule and turning it into a dictatorship of the Saints. In the prefaces of A Holy Commonwealth which he wrote against the pretended right of the godly in the Army to overturn Parliament, Baxter argued that the godly have no right to overthrow even ungodly rulers, much less Parliaments such as Richard's and the Long Parliament: "the predictions of the Power of the Saints do warrant none to usurpe a Power." The wise and good should rule, but wisdom, goodness, and godliness are not party names:

> If it now be in the hearts of any to set up a party . . . instead of all that fear the Lord, and to cry up themselves as the Godly Party, and subdue their Brethren, and captivate those that are better than themselves, let them expect a Munster issue and the Church expect a New England Vindication. Dividing partiality will but shew your want of Charity, that is, of Sanctity.[1]

There was, however, this much truth in the theory of those who thought the godly have a right to rule:

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[1] HC, Preface. He wrote to his friend John Eliot in New England, where the government approximated his ideal, cautioning Eliot against extremes: "As for the divine Government by the Saints which you mention, I dare not expect such great matters upon Earth, lest I encroach upon the Privilege of Heaven, and tempt my own Affections downwards, and forget that our Kingdom is not of this world. Certainly if Christianity be the same thing now that it was at first, it is much unsuitable to a reigning State on Earth: Bearing the Cross, Persecution, Self-denial, etc. sound something of another Nature. . . . May I know Christ crucified on Earth, and Christ glorified in Heaven." Reliquiae, II, 297. Baxter never believed that the Kingdom of God could be realized in history.

> But yet though Godliness give men no Authority, yet as Free-men, we have a certain Liberty and Wickedness may forfeit this Liberty and therefore I shall thus far close with you, that the Church and Commonwealth should be very neare commensurate, and that proved ungodly persons should neither Choose nor be Chosen. Reduce elections to the faithfull, honest, upright men, and settle an impartiall way for the triall of them, and we all agree with you, and profess it to be the only, only, only way to our certain and perpetual peace and happiness.[1]

If Baxter's ideal was not a "dictatorship of the praying classes," how should it be evaluated? Baxter agreed with Plato that the constitution of a commonwealth is ultimately found in the character of the dominant type of man in that commonwealth. The best commonwealth is the commonwealth that is the best man writ large. Baxter's concept of the best man was the Puritan ideal of the godly man who devotes himself to the glory of God and to the common good under God.[2] His ideal was in essence an aristocracy of merit, the standard of merit being the Calvinistic understanding of the good man rather than blood lineage or wealth. He sought for himself and others above all moral likeness to God. This is the true end and happiness of man toward which every energy and institution, including the state, should direct man.

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[1] HC, Preface. One of the principal reasons that the attempts at a Puritan Commonwealth failed was that the Puritans could not "settle an impartiall way for the triall" of who were the "faithful, honest, upright men." Cf. RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 39-41.

[2] For Baxter's description of the character of the godly magistrate, see True Christianity, Works, XVII; CD, IV, 94 ff.; and Directions to Justices of Peace, Works, XV.

What he proposed to do was to make this type of man the dominant character in English society by securing the selection of such men as governors. He believed that this was the only secure foundation on which to build a Christian commonwealth because the powers of the state will be rightly used only when rulers are wise and good. Therefore both the creation and preservation of a good commonwealth is dependent on securing wise and good men as governors. As he warned those who placed their trust in written constitutions and in the form of law and government: "It is not the Holiness of the Office, or the Goodness of Laws and Order that will serve to Reform or make Happy a Church or Nation, in the hands of wicked Men."[1] "No contrivances are of much moment to our happinesse, but those that secure us a succession of good Governours."[2] The essence of his politics was his effort in theory and practice to find the way to secure this ideal amidst the turbulence of Seventeenth Century England. It was an ancient ideal in a new age which was increasingly unreceptive to such ideals because of an increasing preference for freedom over goodness.

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[1] Of National Churches, p. 56. Cf. CD, VI, 51.

[2] HC, p. 224.

Richard Baxter and the Liberal Democratic State

Any attempt at comparision or evaluation in the history of ideas is fraught with difficulties. Concepts like democracy, liberty, consent, state, etc., are complex concepts which have had different meanings and connotations in the different contexts in which they have been used in the history of political thought. Democracy, for example, is regarded as good today. Yet its popularity is of very recent origin. As to the meaning of democracy, communist and capitalist countries alike claim to be democracies. Baxter would have called the American system of government a mixed government, not a democracy. To try to evaluate causal relationships is even more perilous. The ideal of the liberal democratic state is the product of a complex historical development in which men, events, ideas, and institutions all interacted and had a part. To evaluate the place of any one man or movement in this development involves a measure of risky speculation.

That to evaluate Baxter's contribution and place in the development of Anglo-American political thought is particularly difficult is illustrated by the great contrast in the interpretation which Schlatter[1] and Jordan[2] have given him. Schlatter emphasizes the conservative, authoritarian, anti-democratic, anti-toleration elements in Baxter's thought. Jordan, on the other hand, describes Baxter as a moderate liberal figure and goes so far as to say that he had moved to "subjective individualism."[1]

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[1] RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 3-42. [2] III, 316-46.

The differences in these interpretations are partially explained by the perspectives from which the authors view Baxter. Schlatter believes that "We have heard so much of Puritanism and liberty and Puritanism and democracy that we tend to forget that to the majority of seventeenth-century Puritans, both English and American, 'democracy' and 'liberty' were despicable."[2] He wants to correct this overemphasis and uses Baxter to accomplish this purpose. He thus focuses on the anti-democratic, anti-toleration elements in Baxter's thought. The standards by which he evaluates Baxter are the modern Anglo-American ideals of democracy and religious liberty. Jordan's interpretation of Baxter is part of a four volume exhaustive study of the development of religious toleration in England. He therefore views Baxter in relation to the past and to his contemporaries rather than comparing him with modern views. In this framework, Baxter seems moderate and liberal. By modern norms he was a conservative authoritarian. But in evaluating his position and contribution, it should not be forgotten that during most of his life he was regarded as a dangerous subversive, not an authoritarian conservative.

There is validity in both these interpretations, but any valid evaluation of Baxter's position and contribution must begin by viewing him in the context of his age. Seventeenth Century England was in transition from absolute monarchy to mixed constitutional government, from religious uniformity to religious pluralism, from Divine Right to social contract, from the medieval ideal of the theocratic _respublica_ _Christiana_ to the modern secular nation state, all, in the broadest perspective, facets of the shift from the medieval to the modern world. As an eclectic, mediating thinker, Baxter's thought has elements of each of these positions. For though he was greatly influenced by the ideas of the past, he also tried to meet the new conditions of his age. As his age was transitional, so was his thought.

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[1] III, 346. [2] RB and Puritan Politics, pp. 3-4.

Baxter's indebtedness to the past for the theocratic ideal of the _respublica_ _Christiana_, the doctrines of the two powers, the duty of the magistrate to promote true religion, the subservience of the state to ethical purpose, etc. has already been sufficiently treated as to need no further elaboration. What is not so clear is his relationship to the emerging ideals of liberal democracy. In his interpretation Schlatter emphasizes Baxter's ties to the past to the denial of any influence on the future: he is "near the end of a tradition which, although someone is always trying to revive it as a weapon in the never-ending war on liberty and democracy, has long been dead."[1] Schlatter contrasts Baxter

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1. _RB_ _and_ _Puritan_ _Politics_, p. 21.

with his younger contemporary, John Locke, who "drew ideas from the Hookers, the Hobbesses, and the Harringtons, whom Baxter despised and feared; and Locke became the official theorist of the apparently triumphant liberalism of the future. Meanwhile, Baxter was forgotten."[1]

Baxter stood much closer to Locke than this interpretation indicates. Indeed, he made a substantial contribution to the emerging Whig political thought of which Locke was the chief spokesman. Hobbes and Harrington stood outside and Hooker, Baxter, and Locke stood in the mainstream of the Christian natural law tradition, and in this tradition, Baxter's thought is more akin to Locke's than is Hooker's.[2]

The quality of Baxter's thought is indicated in his recognition of the fundamental issues at stake, although he might not be able to give adequate solutions. The fundamental transition

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1. RB and Puritan Politics, p. 37.

2. The triumphant politics of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century England was the traditional English constitution, not the absolutism of Hobbes or the classical, utopian republicanism of Harrington. As for Schlatter's assertion of Locke's "naturalism," his and Whig thought in general rest on the Christian natural law tradition. Government is not a mere social contract but part of the divine constitution of the cosmos. For this view of Locke's thought, see W. von Leyden, ed., Essays on the Law of Nature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) and Carl J. Friedrich, Transcendent Justice: the Religious Dimension of Constitutionalism (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964). For a contrary view linking Locke more closely with Hobbes, see Richard H. Cox, Locke on War and Peace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

which was taking place in the intellectual revolution in Seventeenth Century England was in the framework or pattern in which men perceive and interpret the nature of the world, society, and themselves. The dominant pattern of medieval thought was organic, teleological, and hierarchical. The constitution of the world, of society, and of man himself was conceived as hierarchically ordered. In the Seventeenth Century this way of perceiving and interpreting was being challenged and partially replaced by new patterns. The acceptance of a mechanistic and mathematical pattern was being fostered by the successes of the new natural and mathematical sciences. In this pattern the world and man himself are viewed as complex machines governed by immanent laws. The most able of the proponents of this view was Thomas Hobbes, who was "both mathematical and materialistic-mechanical."[1] Baxter recognized this new pattern as a very serious threat to the moral, rational nature of man and the government of God. He did not, however, simply reassert the old medieval pattern. Although there are elements of that pattern in his thought, he turned to another pattern, covenant, as his basic interpretive model.

Like the Puritans in general, Baxter made covenant the ordering principle of the world.[1] The Calvinistic emphasis on the sovereignty of God could easily have become a predetermined, mechanistic interpretation of reality. The Puritan use of the covenant pattern prevented this possibility and preserved the moral, rational government of God through moral law. In such a pattern members of the Kingdom of God are not automatons or even passive members but are called to become full citizens of the Kingdom of God by consent and participation in it. If the full implications of God's absolute sovereignty were mechanically interpreted, God's rule would be rule by absolute, determining power. But this is not the pattern of relationship in the covenant pattern, where the relationship is a moral relationship of obligation rather than of predetermination or forced coercion.

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[1] Leo Strauss, Natural Rights and History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 170.

By using the covenant pattern to interpret human society, Puritanism and Baxter also made a substantial contribution in transforming the largely passive members of the medieval hierarchical and organic respublica Christiana into the active, participating citizens of the liberal democratic state. Baxter's doctrine of private judgment, that is, that every man must be responsible for his actions and can not surrender this responsibility to state, Church, or any other under God, is the foundation for a concept of the responsible self which distinguishes the citizen from the mere member. Baxter was authoritarian and magisterial, but he insisted that every individual's rights and conscience must be tenderly respected because every individual must have the liberty to perform his inalienable duties. Men must therefore be governed morally and rationally, not arbitrarily by an absolute power by coercion or even paternally by a hierarchical power. For to do so reduces men to "brutes" by denying their moral, rational, and therefore responsible natures.

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[1] This treatment of the covenant pattern is indebted to H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy," Church History, XXIII (1954), 126-35.

This emphasis on the responsible self which went so far to make citizens out of mere members of the body politic was further strengthened by the Puritan ethic with its emphasis on personal discipline and self control, obedience to God in every area of life, and intense activism. The religious emphasis on holiness can lead to withdrawal, as it did in monasticism. The Puritan's holiness was intraworldly. Holiness is exercised by obedience to God in the world of work, politics, etc., as well as in prayer and the private life. They were therefore active in the world with an intense zeal and passion to conform all of life to the will of God. It is this zeal for reform which made it so hard for others to bear with them. At the same time, it gave the Puritan a sense of responsibility and therefore of participation which are essential elements in the modern ideal of citizenship.

Similarly, individualism is commonly understood to be an essential element in modern thought. If individualism is understood to mean that every man is accountable for his own actions and for the society in which he lives, that he cannot avoid such responsibility by giving rulers the responsibility for deciding for him, then Baxter was an individualist. He would, for example, understand both the conscientious objector whose tender conscience scruples participation in the war in Viet Nam and who can not be silenced simply because public authority declares it just and, on the other hand, the Vista volunteer who feels a personal responsibility to create the "Great Society."

The foundation of Baxter's political thought was laid in this covenant interpretation. For this interpretation defines the nature of man and the government which is appropriate to that nature. In an analysis of the origin and nature of Western constitutionalism, Carl J. Friedrich suggests that its origin was in the Christian concept of the self which eventually gave rise to a notion of natural rights, that is, the concept that men have a right to certain spheres of genuine independence from the interference of the ruler.[1] Medieval thought and Richard Hooker had a doctrine of constitutionalism based upon the transcendent justice of natural law, that is, the doctrine that man must be governed justly and under law. Baxter took this older constitutionalism farther and made it more effective by developing doctrines of lawful resistance and natural rights from natural law.

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[1] Op. cit.

Baxter's doctrine of natural law may be called a liberal Christian natural law doctrine. It is Christian or theistic because it regards natural law as the expression of God's will. It is liberal because natural rights and a right to resist are derived from the duties of natural law. His liberal natural law doctrine is one of the reasons that Baxter may be regarded as a forerunner of Locke and a substantial contributer to the development of Whig political thought.

Locke's indebtedness to Anglican natural law thinkers such as Richard Hooker and Robert Sanderson is well known.[1] But natural law in their thought was used conservatively to foster obedience to rulers. In particular, they did not derive natural rights or a doctrine of resistance from natural law.[2] The background for the liberal elements in Locke's doctrine of natural law must be found elsewhere, in thinkers like Baxter who linked natural law with rights and resistance.[1]

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[1] See for example, von Leyden, op. cit., pp. 30ff.

[2] "The notion of natural right had undergone a fundamental change between Hooker and Locke." Strauss, op. cit., pp. 165-66. Strauss calls Hooker "one of least revolutionary men who ever lived." Ibid., p. 207. Sanderson lead the Prelates and Baxter the Puritans at the Savoy Conference in 1660, where government and law were discussed. Sanderson thought that Baxter's doctrines undermined all human sovereignty.

This is not to claim that Locke was directly influenced by Baxter, although he did have every opportunity to be so influenced. He certainly must have known at least Baxter's general position. As the leading spokesman for the conservative Puritans, his position was very well known by informed persons. In addition, Locke had more opportunity than most to know Baxter's position because according to Locke's biographer, he appears to have maintained "some intimacy with Richard Baxter."[2]

What is at least certain is that a liberal doctrine of natural law, that is, a doctrine linking natural law with natural rights and resistance, had been developed before Locke. Locke's indebtedness to another conservative Puritan, George Lawson, whom Baxter regarded as the ablest political theorist of the Interregnum period and from whom he said that he learned more than from any other, has been increasingly recognized.[1] Baxter and Lawson were the two ablest representatives of the Puritans who synthesized the natural law tradition with Puritan thought, the result being a liberal natural law doctrine. This synthesis was a substantial contribution to the emerging Whig political thought of which Locke was the chief representative.[2] As has been suggested, from his Puritan heritage Baxter derived the elements to make natural law a liberal rather than a conservative force. On the other hand, he recognized the validity of Hooker's criticism of

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[1] Strauss traces a source of Locke's doctrine of natural rights to Hobbes. Op. cit., pp. 166ff. But Hobbes had no doctrine of resistance. Locke's doctrine of natural right is also much closer to Baxter's than to Hobbes's. Locke and Baxter derive rights from natural law. Hobbes does not. A great deal of Strauss's criticism of Locke is based on a dislike of Locke's voluntarism, that is, the belief that the natural law is based on God's command. Ibid., pp.202ff. It will be recalled that Baxter also had a voluntaristic doctrine of natural law. See above, pp. 91ff. The source of this is probably Calvinism and the general voluntarism of the Seventeenth Century, not Hobbes. One of the useful purposes of studying thinkers like Baxter is the light they shed on the background of major thinkers such as Locke.

[2] H. R. Fox Bourne, The Life of John Locke (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Bros., 1876), I, 309.

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[1] For Lawson's influence on Baxter, see above p. 51, footnote 1. For Lawson's influence on Locke, see A. H. Maclean, "George Lawson and John Locke," Cambridge Historical Journal, IX, 1, (1947), 69-77 and J. W. Gough, John Locke's Political Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), pp. 99f., 109f., 124. Gough concludes, "Locke's characteristic arguments, in fact, had long been commonplaces of political theory, but the conclusion to be drawn from this is not necessarily that he deliberately, or even consciously, plagiarized this author or that. They were part of the usual mental furniture of every 'liberal' thinker of his age." Ibid., p.24, footnote 2.

[2] Baxter was also a forerunner of Locke in other respects. Locke is the best known of Seventeenth writers on The Reasonableness of Christianity, but Baxter was the first to write on this subject in the English language, e.g. in his The Unreasonableness of Infidelity of 1655 and The Reasons of the Christian Religion of 1667. Gough discusses Baxter as a predecessor of Locke's doctrines of property, government as a trust, etc. Op cit., pp. 162 ff., 176. Among the other doctrines where Baxter was Locke's predecessor are the analysis of sovereignty in terms of the three functions of government with the supremacy of the legislative, the limitations of the sovereign by the natural law and the constitution (social contract), the distinction between society and government, natural rights, resistance, the mixed government as best, the distinction of political from paternal government, etc.

Puritanism's tendency toward a biblical positivism and disparagement of human reason. He therefore modified his Puritan heritage at these points.[1]

Baxter is farthest from the ideals of liberal democracy, and therefore most unattractive to modern liberal democrats, in his opposition to democracy and unlimited religious toleration. Baxter opposed unlimited, absolute government, but he thought a "numerous democracy" was not a good alternative. He was troubled by the theoretical and practical issues raised by the use of coercion in religion, but he opposed unlimited toleration. The radical Puritans had cut the Gordian knot of the question of the magistrate's role in religion by separating Church and state and had also embraced democratic ideals. Their ideal was free Churches in a free state. Eventually even the representatives of the theocratic tradition accepted this.[2] Although defeated in the

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[1] With Hooker he held: "God hath made reason essential to our nature; it is not our weakness but our natural excellency, and his image on our nature. Therefore, he never called us to renounce it, or lay it by: for we have no way to know principles but by an intellectual discerning of them in their proper evidence; and no way to know conclusions by, but by a rational discerning their necessary connection to those principles. If God would have us know without reason, he would not have made us reasonable creatures." _The Reasons of the Christian Religion_. Cited in Powicke, II, 259.

[2] For the acceptance of religious liberty and separation of Church and state by later representatives of the theocratic tradition in America, see James Fulton Maclear, "The True American Union of Church and State: The Reconstruction of the Theocratic Tradition," _Church History_, XXVIII (1959), 41-62, and Sanders,

Seventeenth Century England, the fundamental ideas they had first enunciated were to become the accepted ideas of Anglo-American civilization. But though Baxter opposed democracy and religious liberty ideas, this does not mean that his relationship to them was purely negative. For he did contribute to their eventual acceptance by tempering the theocratic tradition.

The radical Puritans and secular Democrats like Harrington were a very small minority in England. Their ideas were opposed by Baxter and the great majority, particularly the great majority of the men of property and the Orthodox churchmen. Even John Locke, the spokesman for emerging liberalism, opposed both unlimited toleration and democracy.

Recent study of the development of Locke's thought has revealed that "Locke in 1660 and 1661 was . . . a man of the Right, an extreme authoritarian."[1] In two political writings in

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op. *cit*., Ch. V, "Moderation and Pragmatism: The Transformationists." Although accepting full religious liberty and the separation of Church and state institutionally, the later representatives of the theocratic tradition believed in the Christian permeation and transformation of culture. They opposed a purely social contract theory of the state out of conviction that political government is a part of the constitution of the cosmos. They had "a pessimistic view of man which, in an age when Americans began thinking seriously in perfectionist terms led them to emphasize instead the need for proper direction and restraint of the populace." Sanders, *ibid*., p. 251.

[1] von Leyden, *op*. *cit*., p. 22.

this period he dealt with toleration and the power of the magistrate in religion.[1] In these, "in a polemical spirit and in connection with one of the most controversial issues of the day, he set out to argue against a too general toleration and, for the purpose of preserving the peace, in favour of a wide exercise of influence by the civil power."[2] Locke, indeed, continued to oppose toleration for Papists and atheists. As for his ideas on the best form of government, in 1660 Locke was a right-wing monarchist. He later became more liberal. But he continued to support monarchy in later life, the English limited variety, as did Baxter. As for democracy, in Locke's theory "working men were excluded from the full responsibilities and privileges of political society." Among the reasons why Locke looked askance at "numerous democracy" was his conviction that "the greatest part of mankind have not the leisure for learning logic."[3]

There was thus not a radical difference in these issues between Locke and Baxter. Indeed, on the issue of toleration, where the largest difference existed, in Bourne's biography of

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[1] The authors against whom Locke wrote, Henry Stubbe and Edward Bagshaw, both opposed Baxter in their writings.

[2] Maurice Cronston, John Locke (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 67. For a condensed presentation of this excellent study, see Maurice Cranston, Locke (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1961).

[3] Cranston, Locke, p. 32.

Locke, Baxter appears as a friend and ally with Locke of religious liberty.[1] Moreover, the context of their thought differed. Locke was Baxter's younger contemporary. Yet, paradoxically, Locke wrote against a conservative opponent, while Baxter wrote against radical democrats. Locke wrote against the Divine Right, paternal monarchy of Filmer. Baxter wrote primarily against the Levellers and Harrington. If Locke had written on the Levellers and Baxter on Filmer, it would be more evident that the differences between them is not as great as Schlatter suggests. This very significant difference does remain between Locke and Baxter, however. Locke's thought was theistic. Baxter's thought was theocratic.

Baxter played a significant role in moderating the Protestant theocratic tradition. He was a representative and leader of the Orthodox Churchmen and the men of property who opposed the innovations of Hobbes, Harrington, and the radical Puritans alike. They held on to traditional ideas, and the traditional ideal was a Christian or theocratic monarchical commonwealth. By advocating a greater degree of religious toleration than earlier representatives of the theocratic tradition, a mixed limited government, natural rights, the right of private judgment, etc., Baxter tempered that tradition and prepared the way for the even more liberal ideas of Locke.

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[1] Op. cit., pp. 275, 309. Locke, like Baxter, supported the strategy of a comprehensive Church to cure the divided state of the English Church.

Moreover, although there is a great deal to say for the strategy of religious liberty, separation of Church and state, democracy, and utilitarianism in politics as they were adopted in England and America, there are some valuable insights in the theocratic tradition.

The radical Puritan's strategy of religious liberty secured by separation of Church and state has been understood by some to imply separation of politics from religion. The theocratic emphasis upon obedience to God in every aspect of life, the political as well as private morals and worship, is a very relevant witness in a society where the Christian faith is sometimes so separated from politics. Indeed,the language employed in the theocratic tradition to describe the relation of Church and state, independence, not separation, may be more adequate for theological and practical reasons than the language of separation. The main stream of Protestant theology and ethics, e.g. the Social Gospel and Neo-Orthodoxy, have maintained the theocratic concern for the sovereignty of God over all of life. Without such an emphasis, the Church succumbs to a pietism which narrows its concern to the individual believer or a cultural Christianity which accepts the norms of culture as ultimate. The theocratic emphasis on the sovereignty of God brings the norms of culture under a higher judgment and broadens the Church's concern to include every aspect of society.

In an intriguing analysis of the relationship of Puritanism to the liberal democratic state, Michael Walzer argues that Puritanism produced men who acted in the self-disciplined, public spirited way that early liberals such as Locke believed men would act. "It can only be said that Puritans knew about human sinfulness and that Locke did not need to know."[1] The liberal or Lockeian state could presume the virtue of its citizens' consciences because the work of making consciences upright and public spirited had been accomplished by Puritan and other modes of formation of a Christian conscience.

The question is, can the constitutional, limited, representative government of the liberal democratic state survive where consciences are not so formed?[2] John Hallowell suggests in an analysis of the malaise of Western civilization that liberalism had two conflicting notions of law. One is that law is the expression of will and interest. The other is that law is rooted in transcendent norms and is thus discovered, not made. The bond in the body politic in early liberalism was individual conscience. As the theological foundations of Western civilization were eroded: "The appeal to conscience that was supposed to reconcile these two conflicting principles proved to be without weight or sanction. At best, it was an appeal to a Christian ethic that could not survive the repudiation of the Christian religion."[1] What can be asserted is that Baxter's thought provided a theocentric conscience as a basis for a responsible citizenship which subordinated private interest and will to the common good and God's will.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 302.

[2] This question is raised by Hallowell in Friedrich, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

One of the perplexing problems of the Twentieth and the Seventeenth Centuries is the tension between the individual and the demands of society. Baxter granted that men have natural rights and ought to be ruled by those when they choose. But he rejected the doctrines of popular sovereignty and a purely social contract theory of the state. He did so because he believed the idea of the autonomous individual from which these theories stem is in error. The conditions under which men will live are not purely a matter of individual choice to be settled collectively on the basis of individual interest and desires. Inescapable demands are put upon men, for men begin and end as members of community, in the largest sense of the community of God, then commonwealths, cities, families, etc. There are elements of life in these communities which are not left to choice, including the essential nature of government. Baxter insisted particularly that though governors hold office by the mediation of consent of the individuals who compose a society, yet their office is not the people's creature nor are they to rule by the people's whim and fancy. In Perry Miller's phrasing, "Hence the magistrates spoke for the inner will of the community; they were not lackeys. . . ."[1] Much the same case has been made in modern categories by Walter Lippman in _The Public Philosophy_.[2]

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[1] John H. Hallowell, Main Currents in Modern Political Thought (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1950), p. 92.

Frequent reference has been made to the difficulty of resolving the tension within the Puritan movement between the theocratic thrust and liberty. The theocratic thrust toward the ordering of life in accordance with the will of God emphasizes duty and obedience and in practice could be repressive. To modern minds it generally connotes making men be good. Baxter did indeed disagree with the liberal idea that law and government are necessary evils and that therefore the best government is the one that governs least. He believed that the end of government is to make men good, and he endowed the magistrate with very broad powers to accomplish this end. Zeal for the theocratic vision could produce utopian fanatics among the Puritans, the Fifth Monarchists, for example.

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[1] _Op_. _cit_., p. 424.

[2] (New York: The New American Library, 1955).

On the other hand, as Perry Miller suggests, "We uncover certain well springs of the Puritan movement when we find that the first formulated code of Massachusetts, a colony designed to realize definite ideals of church order and holy living, was not a declaration of righteousness but a prevention of abuses, protecting the rights of Englishmen. . . ."[1]

Baxter had this same concern to prevent the abuse of power and preserve liberty. Yet he also possessed the theocratic vision. He recognized a tension. His first solution was to limit rulers, but not to the point of making it impossible for them to govern well. His final resolution of the tension between the theocratic emphasis on duty and obedience with liberty, however, depended upon his concept of covenant. Within Baxter's covenant interpretation the theocratic ideal is not opposed to freedom, it is its true basis.

Modern liberal thought begins with the will, interests, desires, and essential goodness of the individual. It conceives freedom as primarily freedom from restraint. The obligation of the individual to the natural law discerned through the individual conscience which provided a transcendent basis in early liberals such as Locke has gradually been eroded. The result is a normless society, anomie, in which public issues are resolved on the basis of coalitions between ever changing pressure groups representing particular interests. Tolerance for others' interests, opinions, and desires becomes the supreme virtue. The idea of social contract, which has the connotations of men contracting with one another out of self interest, is an apt model for this pattern of human relations.

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[1] *Op*. *cit*., pp. 409-10.

Although there are similarities between Baxter's covenant pattern and contract, the differences are striking. Covenant has the connotations of commitment, promise, loyalty.[1] A commonwealth to Baxter is an association of men who are bound together in mutual obligation and responsibility, by voluntary consent, to serve God and the common good. In this kind of society freedom is not primarily freedom from but freedom for. Submission to duty, law, and the common good are not therefore incompatible with liberty. Rather to perform duties, to do justice, and to serve the common good is the realization of freedom. Rights and liberties are rooted in duty and commitment. For instance, freedom of speech is based on the duty and commitment to discover and to speak the truth. Law, in this understanding, is the rational instruction of a moral creature in his duty, not a restraint on his liberty. To live under law is the fulfillment of freedom. Although such an interpretation of the relationship of duty and liberty may be extremely difficult, even impossible, to achieve in practice, it does seem more acceptable than the theory of the ultimacy of the desires of autonomous men which interprets liberty as freedom from restraint and law as therefore at best a necessary evil.

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[1] Niebuhr, "The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy," pp. 132ff.

Baxter's doctrine of freedom is a version of the view of freedom being the responsibility and ability to learn and to do the good. In the final analysis he was here and elsewhere a representative of the tradition which was a synthesis of the Biblical and Greek traditions and which is the main tradition of Western civilization. Since he lived in a critical, transitionary period in the development of that tradition, he played an important, though not significantly original, role in its development. Although there are resources as well as weaknesses in his thought, a modern formulation of that tradition must differ from his as his formulation differed from the classical and medieval versions.

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BIOGRAPHY

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Thomas W. Nuckols was born in Louise, Texas, September 21, 1933, to Reno and Floy Nuckols. He was educated in the public schools of Texas, graduating from Burleson High School in 1952. He received the B. A. from Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1956. At Tulane he was elected a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa. From 1956-59 he was a Naval Officer, serving as a Naval Aviator with the collateral duty of Legal Officer. In 1957 he married the former Miss Patsy Ruth Mealor of Commerce, Georgia. They have two children, Ruth E. and Thomas M. After studying during 1959-62 at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, he was awarded the B. D. He held a Rockefeller Brothers Theological Fellowship in 1959-60. In 1960 he was ordained to the ministry. Graduate study was begun in the Ph. D. program in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Duke University in 1962. At Duke University he held Woodrow Wilson, Gurney Harris Kearns, University, and Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowships. In September 1965 he began teaching at Austin College, Sherman, Texas, in the Departments of Religion, Government, and Basic Studies.